NO DOUBT

10 Effective Strategies On How to Deal With Your & Other People's Doubts

By Fahad Tasleem

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I. Introduction

1. Teach a Man to Fish

In the spring of 2020, as the pandemic took hold of the world, companies and organizations started to move operations online. At the time, I was working for a global outreach organization and we were scrambling to figure out how to move our operations online as well. We quickly organized an online chat service where we would engage with people all across the world in order to invite them to Islam. A wide range of people started to log on and our chat agents were now being exposed to questions, and sometimes threats, that they had never encountered in the past. Perhaps the anonymity of being behind a screen allowed introverted and insular people to speak freely.

In one such chat session, I was confronted with a question I was unable to answer. Having been in this field for almost 20 years, there have only been two occasions where I was presented with a question that I was unable to answer, either directly or by further researching the question, asking scholars, students of knowledge, etc. This was one of those occasions. The person on the chat told me that they had been suffering through a lot of anxiety and depression. However, in the midst of the pandemic, now having more time to think deeply about life and meaning, they started to study Islam. This person said that they found Islam to be an existential breath of fresh air and they decided to become Muslim.

At this point in the chat, I was getting ready to send the person information on courses and books that would help a person in their journey as a new Muslim but there was a question from this person that was related to something no new Muslim book or course dealt with. They said that what they were suffering from when they found Islam was "gender dysphoria" and when they found Islam, they were in the middle of transitioning from one gender to another. They were undergoing hormone therapy and had some surgeries and were scheduled for more surgeries. "So my question is, should I stop and try to go back to my original gender or should I continue my transition? Also, when I go to the mosque, which side do I pray on, the men's side or the women's side?"

I did not know how to answer this question. I took out my phone and started to frantically text scholars and students of knowledge I knew personally. Unfortunately, I didn't hear back from anyone. The person on the chat clicked off and I never heard from them again.

This was my first encounter with Transgenderism. I subsequently started studying the phenomenon in more detail and I was surprised with its ubiquitousness. This phenomenon was relatively unheard of historically and now seemed to be everywhere. Abigail Shrier writes that "In 2018, the UK reported a 4,400 percent rise over the previous decade in teenage girls seeking gender treatments."[1]

This phenomenon was not only affecting the population at large, but it was having ramifications on Muslims as well. The Islamic paradigm dictates a normative understanding of genders as opposed to accomodating a spectrum of genders, easily detached from one's anatomy. The Qur'an states,

"*O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware*" [Qur'an, 49:13]

In other words, Muslims are required to be "cisnormative". This term, "cisnormative" has a deeply negative connotation in contemporary society. By asserting that God created two distinct genders that are not detached from their anatomical reality, one may be accused of being intolerant of people who identify as transgender or queer and by extension, supporting bullying against them. While this discussion needs to be much more nuanced, we can observe the seeds of what will germinate to become a paradigmatic tug of war between Islam and transgenderism. The bitter fruit that may manifest out of this tug of war is doubts about Islam.

The book that you are currently reading is about doubts. While one of the sources of doubts about Islam could be transgenderism, it may not be the doubt that you are having or someone you know is experiencing. Perhaps, that doubt stems from a problematic hadith you read or not being able to reconcile science and certain verses of the Qur'an. Maybe a traumatic experience has led you to question God's mercy or perhaps, the idea of following a religion with so many rules is too much to swallow. Whatever doubts you or someone you know is going through, this book has been written to address them.

One approach to dealing with doubts is to thoroughly analyze each doubt, understand its philosophical underpinnings, and provide a robust response to that particular doubt. Consider the following ideologies, movements, philosophies, etc.:

Atheism

Liberalism

Transgenderism

Postmodernism

Nihilism

Feminism

Bukamism

Kuyulism

While I'm sure you are more or less familiar with these concepts, imagine studying each one in detail. How much time would it take? In fact, if one was to study each ideology and address every extant doubt, the output would not just fill a few volumes of books but rather multiple tomes of literature. Let us imagine that we in fact, complete this monumental task, what happens when a new doubt arises? Would we then need to thoroughly research that concept?

A better approach would be the one we will be using in this book. There is an old adage that states, "If you give a man a fish, he will eat for a day but if you teach a man to fish, he will eat for a lifetime." The approach we are adopting is to teach you how to fish. In other words, instead of delving into each doubt and playing an infinite game of cosmic whack-a-mole, we are going to start with foundations, such that if a new doubt arises, you will be empowered to deal with it. (By the way, two of the terms in the above list don't actually exist. I just made them up to make this point.)

[1] Abigail Shrier, *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* (Simon and Schuster, 2020), pg.26

2. Roadmap

The goal of this book is to equip you with the epistemic, psycho-spiritual tools to deal with your or other people's doubts.

We do that starting in Part I by expounding upon foundations. This part has been titled "Metaphysical Backdrop." Metaphysics studies the fundamental nature of reality. The term "metaphysics" has been coined from the Greek, μετά τα φυσικά or "beyond the physics". In a sense, if we understand "the physics" to refer to the physical world (i.e. that which we perceive by way of our senses: sight, sound, touch, etc.) then 'meta'-physics deals with concepts that are non-physical. The prefix 'meta' is used in a number of words that highlight the idea of concepts that precede, transcend and/or form the anchor for the term that is being prefixed.

For example, when speaking about 'metalearning', Scott Young writes, "The prefix *meta* comes from the Greek term μετά, meaning "beyond." It typically signifies when something is "about" itself or deals with a higher level of abstraction. In this case metalearning means learning about learning![1]

Another way of understanding the signification of the prefix 'meta' is by way of ethical '*meta*'-language. In our use of ethical language there have to be certain words that form the grounding for other words. We can think of these words as 'secondarily evaluative' words that anchor 'primarily descriptive' words. For example, the words 'good' and 'true' would be secondarily evaluative. You could ask the question, "why do you want x?" and an appropriate response could be "because it is good." If you now asked, "why want what is good?", you have reached the ambit of reason, leading your interlocutor to respond with something silly like, "because good is good." Primarily descriptive words however, rely on secondarily evaluative words for valuation. So the word "humility" or "humble" can be teased further to reach the word 'good'. You could ask, "why do you like person Y?" and the response could be "because he is humble". Now, if you were to ask, "why do you like humility?", your interlocutor can logically respond with, "because humility is *good*". In this case, the secondarily evaluative word 'good' is part of your ethical '*meta*'-language as Toshihiko Izutsu explains, "In this sense, secondary ethical terms may justly be called ethical metalanguage, and the distinction between primary and secondary level would roughly answer the logician's distinction between object words and logical words."[2]

Returning back to 'Metaphysical Backdrop', in the context of dealing with doubts, one needs to understand one's grounding or basis of reality before one can speak about doubts. This understanding informs a person's view of whether something truly is a doubt or not. Hence, it behooves us to begin with a backdrop exploring the fundamental nature of reality.

Our 'Metaphysical Backdrop' begins with how we conceptualize or frame Islam. Is Islam a religion? An uncritical response of 'yes' to this question testifies to two problems. First, it assumes that 'religion' is a strictly bordered, non-porous, conceptual domain with everything inside the border being 'religion' and everything outside the border being not 'religion'. Second, it casts Islam into this assumed conceptual domain. Our first section, *Islam is NOT a religion*, investigates both of these problems and concludes that indeed Islam is not a religion but is better conceptualized as a worldview. But, what is a worldview?

A worldview can be understood to be the 'lenses' by which we view reality. Our second and third sections, *What is a Worldview?* and *Components of a Worldview* expound upon the definition of worldview and investigate what philosophical components make up a person's worldview. We will see that worldviews impact a person's stance on various social, psychological, economic, political, ethical, etc. issues. Does Islam seem unjustly patriarchial? Can't understand why Islam doesn't allow interest bearing transactions? Having trouble reconciling certain hadith with empirical findings in the natural world? These two sections will provide the paradigmatic solution that the reader will find liberating, God willing.

Once we have thoroughly understood worldview and its components, a natural question would arise: How do we know which worldview is true? This question can be very challenging to answer considering all worldviews have pre-assumptions that cannot be proven. In philosophical parlance, these unprovable pre-assumptions are sometimes referred to as *first principles*. What first principles show us is that pure rationality has limits. Our fourth section, *The Limits of Rationality*, explores those limits and provides justification for the Islamic worldview's first principle: the fitrah.

In the fifth section of our metaphysical backdrop called *The Fitrah: "Original Normative Disposition"*, we explore the concept of the fitrah from an intuitive and scriptural perspective. This section will connect the concept of the fitrah to the concept of the spiritual heart in the Islamic paradigm. This connection is extremely important in understanding how doubts affect the human being since the spiritual heart is the locus of activity for doubts. As such, section 6, *The Nature of the Heart and Its Main Corrupters* presents an overview of how the spiritual heart functions and what are its main challenges, respectively.

Section 6 will also provide an explanation of what a "doubt" is. This may seem a bit late coming considering this is a book on doubts. Why not start the book with an explanation of what a doubt is instead of placing it six sections away from the beginning? If you recall, the overarching title of these sections is "Metaphysical Backdrop". Without a proper backdrop in place, even the definition of the term "doubt" could prove problematic. In this section, we start with the Arabic word that is employed to mean 'doubt' (shubhah) and study its morphology, etymology and usage in Islamic source texts. This will allow us to understand the true nature of doubts and help us identify characteristics of doubts that cause a lack of spiritual homeostasis.

An assiduous understanding of doubts will equip us to better interpret where doubts come from. In our seventh section, *Sources of Doubts*, we take a look at the main areas where doubts originate. The taxonomy used in this book to categorize these sources has been taken from a 2016 study conducted by Yaqeen Institute and published in an article titled, "Modern Pathways to Doubts in Islam"[3] In this article, Youssef Chouhoud organizes the sources of doubts into three broad categories:

- – Moral & Social Concerns
- – Philosophical & Scientific Concerns
- – Personal Trauma

With the proper metaphysical backdrop in place, Part II of the book outlines 10 effective strategies to deal with your or other people's doubts. These strategies will either be preventative or palliative or both. Certain strategies will be more effective as preventative measures being applied before the doubt has taken root in the heart. Other strategies will be more palliative in nature, providing a cure if the doubt has already infected the heart. Briefly, the 10 strategies are as follows:

1. *Be Aware*: This strategy is simply about recognizing danger. Doubts, as we will cover in the metaphysical backdrop, are extremely dangerous since they undermine a person's imān. Thus, one needs to be aware of them.
2. *No Attention*: If we are aware of the dangerous nature of doubts, then it only makes sense to avoid them. This strategy is not a testament to the strength of the doubt but more so it is related to the weakness of our hearts, as we will see, God willing.
3. *Make the Distinction*: It is important to know that there are valid questions we can ask about Islam. However, what's the difference between a valid question and a doubt? There is also a phenomenon known as 'waswasa' (whispering). How do we distinguish between a valid question, a 'waswasa' and a doubt? This strategy equips us with the ability to make the distinction between them.
4. *Your Environment*: In the metaphysical backdrop we look at the limits of rationality and conclude that there are indeed extra rational elements that can affect our perception of truth. One of those elements that affects us is our environment. In this section, we will be presenting studies from social psychology as well as traversing through Islamic source texts to better understand the effects of our environment and how that impacts our hearts.
5. *Study Islam*: Many times a doubt is due to a lack of knowledge about Islam. The strategy of studying Islam is both preventative and palliative because it allows us to sift through actual facts about Islam and mere misconceptions. The *Qur'anic motif* for knowledge is light as it illuminates the darkness of ignorance. This section elucidates the difference between studying Islam and merely studying, the importance of Islamic knowledge in confronting destructive doubts and how Islamic knowledge and spirituality are connected. We will conclude this section with two case studies. One, dealing with women's inheritance and the other dealing with marital age.
6. *Critical Thinking*: This strategy is related to the theo-philosophical understanding of things. Being able to think critically will empower you to transcend doubts by correctly making logical connections between ideas, looking at the philosophical underpinnings of those ideas and arriving at sound conclusions. We will be presenting a case study related to the claim of science being an intellectual source of doubt and study some aspects of the philosophy of science.
7. *Find a Specialist*: Every human being has epistemic limitations. We cannot know everything. One of the means by which we can extend our epistemic limitations is by the testimonial knowledge of others. Think about all of the knowledge housed in other people's minds that you rely upon as you make your way through the modern world. Most of us rely upon pilots to fly planes to get us from one place to another, or rely upon mechanics to present a diagnosis of what is wrong with our vehicles and so on. As such, when it comes to dealing with doubts, finding and consulting a specialist is an indispensable strategy. This section outlines the benefits and need to find specialists in theology, philosophy, spirituality, etc.
8. *Deal with Trauma*: How do we deal with personal trauma, life's trials and tribulations and general negative experiences, especially if we find them becoming a source of doubts? This section will give a strategy that is derived from Islamic orthodoxy and bolstered by cognitive psychology. This strategy asks the reader to reposition the meaning they have attached to the particular traumatic experience to one that is in line with the intended meaning from the Divine.
9. *Focus on Your Heart*: As was mentioned earlier, the heart is the locus of attack for doubts. In this section, we take an exhaustive approach to Islamic pneumatology (study of the spirit) and breakdown the spiritual-material constitution of the human being. We will elaborate upon fundamental ontological questions (e.g. who are you?) and explore the connection between spirituality and doubts. The conclusion of this section will present examples of effective acts of worship that fortify the heart against destructive doubts.
10. Making Du'ā: The preceding 9 strategies will be ineffective without the help of Allah. This is where the last and most important strategy comes into play. Earnestly beseeching Allah for a firm heart, protection from doubts and being granted strong imān are all a part of strategically dealing with doubts. However, there are many factors that enhance the acceptance of one's supplication. These factors include choosing appropriate times, places and situations for making dua, employing the appropriate Name or Attribute of Allah based upon the circumstance, and using supplications from the Qur'an and Sunnah. This section outlines some of the ways to properly make dua and presents some sound supplications from Islamic source texts.

The last part of this book may be treated like an appendix. If one has internalized the concepts and strategies presented up to this point, then *Part III – Popular "Doubts"* should merely serve as a reference. In this part of the book we have collected and analyzed a number of popular and widespread "doubts" which can be found circulating on the internet. These "doubts" are pushed by a number of different groups including ex-Muslims, militant Atheists, Orientalists, Modernists, certain evangelical Christian groups and many others. This "appendix" is by no means an exhaustive list of "doubts" and should not be referred to without covering the previous two parts of this book.

[1] Young, Scott. *Ultralearning: Master Hard Skills, Outsmart the Competition, and Accelerate Your Career*. HarperBusiness, 2019., pg. 53

[2] Izutsu, Toshihiko. *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur__n*. McGill-Queen's Press – MQUP, 2002., pg.20

[3] Chouhoud, Youssef. "Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, October 24, 2016. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/modern-pathways-to-doubt-in-islam.

3. Prerequisites

How you approach this book is extremely important. That is because the purpose of this book is not merely to convey information. Rather, the goal is for you, the reader to change and for your doubts to be gone. In order for that to happen you have to stop and have a moment of introspection. Ask yourself why you are reading this book. Is it to refute the ideas presented and show that Islam is false? Is it to casually peruse the content with no hope of your doubts being defeated? Is it to master the material of this book to be able to debate with Ex-Muslims, Non-Muslims and others?

Now, you may be a Muslim who is having doubts, you may be a Non-Muslim who used to be Muslim, you may be a Non-Muslim looking into Islam. Whatever disposition you are coming from, in order for this book to have a transformative effect on you and decimate your doubts, there are some prerequisites you should take seriously. First, you must stand in the possiblity that you will change and your doubts will be gone. Being open to the possibility of self transformation is necessary in order for this book to be meaningful.

Second, in any endeavor we undertake, it is vital to approach the endeavor with humility and not superimpose our intellectual or emotional baggage upon it. Why? Because this is part of our epistemic duty towards knowledge. We are duty bound to knowledge in this way since if we approach it without a humble predisposition, we are setting up unnecessary impediments to the truth.

Let me borrow an example from online marketing to drive this point home. Imagine that you are the owner of a company that sells jeans. Sales have been slow recently and you have decided to try marketing your jeans by using Facebook ads. Setting up these advertisements seems pretty simple. You come up with a "creative" (i.e. picture, video, drawing) that will attract a person to click on your ad, the person clicks on the ad and the ad takes them to your website where the person will buy your jeans. The first interaction with this customer therefore, is with the "creative". You start working on a great video that's got some humor in it along with a cute tagline and you are sure it will be a hit. After spending three months toiling over this video, how could it not be a hit? In your mind, you start dreaming about all the people who will see this creative and click on the ad because the video was so good. You show the video to a friend and he likes it. Your friend mentions that his 15 year old son, Josh, has a project for his marketing class in school and asks if you would be interested in having him also come up with a creative for your Facebook ad. After one week, Josh shows you his video and it's not too great but you promised your friend that you would use it in an ad. So you do something called an A/B test on the ad. This is where you run the ad with both creatives simultaneously to two separate groups. Low and behold, Josh's video has a click through rate that is 10 times higher than yours. In other words, there are 10 fold more people clicking on his ad than yours. At this point, you can't imagine that his video is better than yours but the numbers don't lie. You have a choice: Side with your enemy (your ego) or side with your friend (humility). If you side with your ego and decide to go with your video instead of Josh's video, you will lose money. Humility is hard but it allows you to accept the truth. Hence, when it comes to the content of this book, in order for it to be efficacious, you have got to make humility your best friend.

The third prerequisite is to understand the difference between abstract knowledge and being. Just acquiring information does not change anyone. It is only when one applies the information to themselves that change can take place. For example, I currently do not have six pack abs. However, I have the intricate knowledge of how to get six pack abs with everything from the precise nutrition to follow to the correct combination of strength training and cardio to apply. There is a difference between knowing and being. With regards to the content of this book, one must internalize and implement it. We will return to the this idea of abstract knowledge vs. being in PART II under the 5th strategy, *Study Islam*. For now, just having appreciation of the concept will suffice as a prerequisite.

4. Islam is NOT a religion

Religion. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you read this word, 'religion'? Perhaps you are thinking about Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or perhaps you are thinking about a set of archaic rituals or a collection of beliefs that are unverifiable.

Is Feminism a religion? Most people would not consider Feminism to be a religion. However, if Feminism is not a religion and Islam is a religion, then we could theorize an "Islamic Feminism" because Feminism and Islam are in separate conceptual domains which can overlap in the area of "Women's rights". There is an underlying problem here which one may miss if they do not explore the philosophical assumptions of both Feminism and Islam. One main assumption that serves as the undergriddle of Feminism comes to the fore when we look at the debate on abortion. "My body, my choice." is echoed in many Feminist rallies. In other words, the underlying assumption is that a person owns themselves. This runs completely antagonistic to the Islamic paradigm, which clearly states that God owns us:

*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "**Indeed we belong to Allah** , and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.*[1]

Islam not only speaks about women's rights but also about men's rights, children's rights, parents' rights, animal rights, and most importantly, God's rights. In fact, to state that there can be an "Islamic Feminism" belies the foundations of Islamic beliefs.

In this section I will be arguing that Islam is NOT a religion and by conceptualizing Islam as a religion, a person will become prone to being affected by doubts. It is

important then to start with the word 'religion' itself. Here I will bifurcate the understanding of the term 'religion' into a 'normative' understanding and a 'descriptive' understanding. By 'normative' I am referring to how the word should be understood, as it describes itself based upon its etymology and linguistic roots. Conversely, when I speak of a 'descriptive' understanding of the word, I am referring to how it is understood in the context in which it is used.

By way of example, consider the word, 'Islam'. A normative understanding of 'Islam' points to what 'Islam' says about itself. 'Islam' is a gerund (verbal noun) whose triliteral root is traced back to 'istislam' which means, "to surrender, capitulate; to give way, surrender, yield"[2] Thus, a normative understanding of Islam would be 'submission or surrender to God.' Compare this to how the word 'Islam' is understood in various contexts. If I mentioned the word to a random stranger in Midland, Texas they may say, "Oh Islam? Yea that's that craziness which causes people to want to kill other people, right?" If I mentioned the word to a person in a mosque, they may say, "Islam is about prayer, fasting, community, brotherhood and great biryani." How the word 'Islam' is understood by the person hearing the word will be dependent upon their surroundings and context. Both of these contexts (Midland and the Mosque) are descriptive understandings of the word.

When we come to the word 'religion' and present a normative and descriptive understanding of the word, it will allow me to fine tune my initial claim i.e. Islam is NOT a religion. Islam is NOT a religion when we consider the descriptive understanding of 'religion'. However, Islam may be considered a 'religion' when we cast the term in its normative light.

We can derive a normative understanding of 'religion' by juxtaposing a pre-modern conceptualization of the word with a contemporary understanding of the word.

What we understand when we hear the word 'religion' today is a consequence of a particular European historical event, as Shahab Ahmed writes, "Fundamental here are the consequences of the fact that the concept and term "religion" as it is used today in the language of modern analysis – both by scholars and laymen – emerged in the wake of the devastating European "Wars of Religion" (1530-1630) as a product of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment Europe. "Religion" was articulated as

instrument and expression of the social and intellectual struggle of Europeans to free themselves from the monopoly of the totalizing truth-claims that were made by and exercised from the social, political, intellectual and material institution of the Christian Church."[3]

The understanding of 'religion' prior to the "Wars of Religion" was much broader and facilitated a comprehensive 'lens' by which to view reality. This 'lens' was provided by the institution of the Christian Church such that, "Christianity was the very air one breathed in what we call Europe and what was then Christendom. It was the atmosphere in which a man lived out his entire life…Today we make a choice to be Christian or not. There was no choice in the sixteenth century. One was Christian in fact."[4]

A reflection of this ubiquitous "air of Christianity" in pre-modern Europe can be seen in the exchange of letters between the Byzantine Emperor Leo III and the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz around the year 720. In one of these letters, Leo III criticizes the Islamic depiction of paradise, which speaks about sensual delights like milk, honey and wine and carnal fulfillment by way of pure virgins:

"…we hope, after our resurrection, to enjoy the celestial kingdom, so we are submissive to the doctrines of the Gospel, and wait humbly for a happiness such that "eyes have never seen it, nor ears ever heard it, but which God has prepared for those who love Him" (I Cor. II, 9). We do not hope to find there springs of wine, honey or milk. We do not expect to enjoy there commerce with women who remain for ever virgin, and to have children by them, for we put no faith in such silly tales…"[5]

What is interesting to note, is that Leo III is not appealing to a logical problem of sensual pleasures in paradise. For if God can create those pleasures on earth, then is it not possible for Him to create them, albeit in a heightened form, in paradise? Rather, because the 'lenses' by which Leo III perceives reality are distinctly Christian, the very notion of such pleasures is "silly".[6]

This expansive understanding of 'religion' was not limited to Christendom, but was also present in the pre-modern Islamic world. Before the arrival of colonial powers into Islamic lands, the wide-range concept of dīn was the 'lens' by which truth was viewed.

If there is a normative understanding of 'religion' (that which was present before the Wars of Religion) and a descriptive understanding of it (that which emerged after the Wars of Religion) then we can say that the concept of dīn is closest to that of the normative understanding of 'religion'. A deeper insight into this normative understanding of 'religion' and the concept of dīn can be obtained by way of studying the etymology and linguistic roots of both terms respectively.

With regards to the etymology of the word 'religion', one opinion is that the word originated from the Latin "religare" (to bind) which then morphed into "religio" meaning an obligation, bond or reverence. Another opinion, states that the word "religio" can actually be traced back to the term "relegere" and thus, "religio" actually means "to go through over again in reading, speech and thought."[8]

Based upon the etymology, we can propose that 'religion' is that which you are obligated to follow due to some exoteric bond or based upon a deep, esoteric reverence and that is fortified by repetitive thought, conversation or reading. Note that this conceptualization of 'religion' would now encompass Feminism, Liberalism, Transgenderism, Capitalism, etc. because one could find themselves obligated to their precepts due to either being exoterically bound to these ideologies or having an esoteric reverence for them and then in turn, the claimed veracity of these ideologies is fortified by repetition in the media, academic institutions, social events, etc.

This conceptualization of religion can be mapped out, albeit not perfectly, to the word 'dīn' in the Islamic framework. Linguistically, dīn comes from an Arabic triliteral root which has a number of related concepts to the etymological understanding of 'religion': recompense, obligation, indebtedness, etc.[8] *The term is very often used with a transactional framing i.e. exchanging something for something else. For example, there is an Arabic proverb which uses a form of the word: kamā tadinu tudān, "as you do, so shall you be repaid".*[9]

Also, in the first, supplicatory chapter of the Qur'an, the 3rd verse reads: Māliki yaum al-dīn Sovereign on the Day of Recompense.[10] Commenting on this verse, Muhammad Mohar Ali says, "Dîn has a multiplicity of meanings depending upon the contexts, such as judgement, reckoning, and awarding of reward and punishment, religion or way of life and millah or community."[11] It follows that any notion of judgment, reckoning, awarding of reward and punishment, etc. must have a system, law or standard upon which it is based. Otherwise, how can one make a judgment, or reward or punish, or call to reckon without a standard by which

[1] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Baqarah [2:155-157] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed February 21, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/2/155-157.

[2] Wehr, Hans, and J. Milton Cowan. Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (English and Arabic Edition). Snowballpublishing.com, 2020., pg. 496 under verb form X, سلم

[3] Ahmed, Shahab. What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic. Princeton University Press, 2017., pg. 177

[4] Febvre, Lucien. The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais. Harvard University Press, 1982., pg. 336

[5] Jeffery, Arthur. "Ghevond's Text of the Correspondence between 'Umar II and Leo III." The Harvard Theological Review 37, no. 4 (1944): 269–332. https://doi.org/10.2307/1508294., pg. 328

[6] Early Christianity generally regarded sex or sexual desire as evil or sinful. Anselm of Canterbury, an 11th-century monk is quoted to have said, "There is one evil, an

evil above all other evil, that I am aware is always with me, that grievously and piteously lacerates and afflicts my soul. It was with me from the cradle, it grew with me in childhood, in adolescences, in my youth it always struck me, and it does not desert me even now that my limbs are failing because of my old age. This evil is sexual desire." See Carlton, Genevieve. "Weird Things That Early Christianity Regarded As Sexual Sins." Ranker, November 16, 2017. https://www.ranker.com/list/what-counted-as-early-christian-sins/genevieve-carlton.

[7] *Regarding the etymology of 'religion', Sarah Hoyt writes, "The Oxford Dictionary says, The connection of the word religion with religare, to bind, has usually been favored by modern writers. This etymology, given by Roman grammarian (end of 4th cent. A.D.) Servius (Relliogo, id est metus ab eo quod mentum religet, dicta religio) was supported by the Christian philosopher Lactantius (about 313 A.D.) who quotes the expression of the celebrated Roman philosophical poet Lucretius: religionum animum nodis exsolvere, in proof that he considered ligre, to bind, to be the root of religio... The Century Dictionary, though referring to the uncertain origin of religio, cites the English ligament as perhaps allied. So, Harper's Latin Lexicon refers to Corssen's Aussprache as taking religio in the same sense as obligatio (obligation)... But in De NaturaDeorum, 2, 28, 72, Cicero derives religio from relegere, as meaning to go through or over again in reading, speech or thought." See Hoyt, Sarah F. "The Etymology of Religion." Journal of the American Oriental Society 32, no. 2 (1912): 126. https://doi.org/10.2307/3087765.*

[8] *Wehr, Hans, and J. Milton Cowan. Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (English and Arabic Edition). Snowballpublishing.com, 2020. Pg. 353 under* دان (دين)

[9] *Lane, Edward W., and Stanley Lane-Poole. An Arabic-English Lexicon. Cosimo Incorporated, 2013. Pg. 949*

[10] *القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Fatihah – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed February 22, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/1.*

[11] *Ali, Muhammad Mohar. A Word for Word Meaning of the Qur'an, 2002. pg.1*

5. What is a Weltanschauung?

In 1781, in the East Prussian city of Konigsberg, a frail man of fifty seven years wrote his first book which would go on to powerfully challenge the ideas of famous empiricists like David Hume and John Locke. This man was none other than Immanuel Kant and the book he wrote was called The Critique of Pure Reason. This "critique" would be the first of three books he published over the course of nine years. As Kant sat down in 1790 to write his third "critique" called The Critique of Judgment, he wrote a word in German that would reverberate until today. This word would traverse many fields including Sociology, Cognitive Psychology, and Linguistics. It would be used 175 years after it was first penned by a Japanese man writing in Tokyo, Japan on the subject of Qur'anic Studies.[1] That word was "Weltanschauung".

The English word *Worldview* is a calque of this German word. A calque is a phrase or a word that is borrowed from another language by directly translating the term word-for-word. In this case, Weltanschauung is composed of *Welt*, which means 'world' and *Anschauung* which means 'view' or 'perception'.

In our discussion in the previous chapter, we showed that understanding Islam as a religion is problematic. In this chapter, we will explore how to properly conceptualize Islam, moving from understanding it as a religion to understanding it as a worldview. Worldview is a better and 'tighter' approximation of the meaning of the word 'din' (as compared to 'religion') and and since Islam is a din, grasping worldview will allow us to more clearly understand Islam. This, in turn will empower us to deal with doubts about Islam.

A worldview is a framework of ideas and beliefs that inform one's interpretation of the world they inhabit. This framework rests on existential questions i.e. questions about a person's existence. Questions like, "Where did I come from?", "Why am I here?", and "What happens when I die?" James Anderson, expounding upon the answer to 'what is a worldview?' writes,

"A person's worldview represents his most fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the universe he inhabits. It reflects how he would answer all the "big questions" of human existence: fundamental questions about who and what we are, where we came from, why we're here, where (if anywhere) we're headed, the meaning and purpose of life, the nature of the afterlife, and what counts as a good life here and now. Few people think through these issues in any depth, and fewer still have firm answers to such questions, but a person's worldview will at least incline him toward certain kinds of answers and away from others."[2]

As Anderson mentions, few people will think deeply about existential questions and yet, the answers or lack thereof will determine how a person interprets reality.

To state it in a different way, a worldview is the 'lens' by which a person 'views' reality:

"Worldviews shape and inform our experiences of the world around us. Like spectacles with colored lenses, they affect what we see and how we see it. Depending on the "color" of the lenses, some things may be seen more easily, or conversely, they may be de-emphasized or distorted—indeed, some things may not be seen at all."[3]

Imagine that you are wearing glasses with green lenses and I am wearing glasses with red lenses. If I pointed to a tree and tried to convince you that the leaves of the tree are red, it would be extremely difficult if not impossible for you to accept that the leaves of the tree are red. Worldviews operate in a similar way with one crucial difference. In my analogy, you could theorize that we could both take off our glasses and view the tree with our naked eye and reach some sort of objective understanding of the color of the leaves. When it comes to worldviews, this would not be possible because everyone has a worldview and there is no way to interpret reality without a worldview. In fact, even if someone claimed they could somehow transcend worldviews (i.e. take off their 'glasses'), that claim would be based upon their worldview.

We can compare worldviews to languages we speak or directions we face. Everyone has a language they speak, just like everyone has a direction they face. No person can cogitate or communicate without a language. Similarly, a person is always facing a direction; they cannot be 'direction-less'. When a person has an awareness of this fact, i.e. everyone has a worldview, it will allow them to analyze their own worldview and that of others as well.[4]

The connection between worldviews and direction is alluded to in the 2nd chapter of the Qur'an:

Everyone has a direction towards which he faces. So race to [all that is] good. Wherever you may be, Allah will bring you forth [for judgment] all together. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.[5]

While this verse is speaking about a particular event in early Islamic history, namely, the changing of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to Makkah in 624CE, it is also linking direction to morality. In other words, what we deem to be moral vs. immoral, good vs. evil, pious vs. impious is dependent upon the 'direction' (read: worldview) we are facing.

Commenting on this verse, the famous 14th century exegete, Ibn Kathir writes,

"This talks about followers of the various religions. Hence, every nation and tribe has its own Qiblah (direction of prayer) that they choose, while Allah's appointed Qiblah is what the believers face. Abul-'Aliyah said, "The Jew has a direction to which he faces. The Christian has a direction to which he faces. Allah has guided you, O (Muslim) Ummah, to a Qiblah which is the true Qiblah." This statement was also related to Mujahid, `Ata' Ad-Dahhak, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, As-Suddi, and others. This last verse is similar to what Allah said: "...to Everyone We made a law and a method..." (Qur'an 5:48)"[6]

As is part of the hermeneutical principle that Ibn Kathir adopts where he explains one verse of the Qur'an with another verse of the Qur'an, he links 'everyone having a direction' (Qur'an 2:148) with 'everyone having a law and method' (Qur'an 5:48). To put it in our 'worldview' framework, everyone has a system (law/method) by which they will determine morality which is dependent upon their worldview (direction). James Anderson states the same concept as follows:

"Worldviews also largely determine people's opinions on matters of ethics and politics. What a person thinks about abortion, euthanasia, same-sex relationships, environmental ethics, economic policy, public education, and so on will depend on his underlying worldview more than anything else."[7]

Thus, before we can even start the discussion about doubts in Islam, whether those doubts are related to ethical / moral doubts (e.g. why are same sex relationships not allowed in Islam?), philosophical / scientific doubts (e.g. how could the Prophet Noah live for more than 950 years?) or trauma (why would Allah do this to me?), we must understand our worldview. With that being said, what makes up a person's worldview?

[1] *See Izutsu, Toshihiko. God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung, 2002.*

[2] *Anderson, James . "What Is a Worldview?" Ligonier Ministries, June 21, 2017. https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-worldview/.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Sometimes what might happen is that a person could find themselves switching between competing worldviews depending upon their particular environment. This is something that Muslims living in the West would be acutely aware of since they are having to negotiate an Islamic worldview with a modern worldview. There is a paradigm (Islamic worldview) that one may adopt in the Masjid surrounded by Muslims and a different paradigm (modern worldview) when one is interacting with society outside of the Masjid. Again, we can compare this to language. If someone is a second generation immigrant to, say the United States, and they are bilingual, speaking Arabic, Urdu, Turkish, etc. inside the home and English outside the home, they would be subject to 'code-shifting' between the two languages depending upon the particular context at the time. However, one language would be dominant, fluid and strong while the other would be comparatively subordinate, choppy and weaker. This is true for competing worldviews as well. One worldview would necessarily be dominant and may completely overshadow the other worldview.*

[5] *القرآن الكريم, "Surat Al-Baqarah [2:148] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed February 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/2/148.*

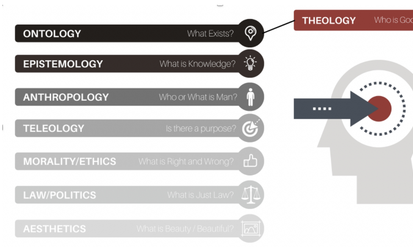
[6] *Kathīr, Ismāʻīl ibn ʻUmar Ibn. Tafsir Ibn Kathir. Maktaba Darussalam, 2000. Vol. 1, Pgs. 434-435*

[7] *Anderson, James . "What Is a Worldview?" Ligonier Ministries, June 21, 2017. https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-worldview/.*

6. Components of a Worldview

When trying to comprehend one's worldview or the 'lenses' by which one perceives reality, we can do so by breaking it down into eight main components. It is important to keep in mind that these eight components have been categorized to facilitate ease in understanding worldview and are by no means absolute or immutable. In other words, one could further break down the categories into ten or twelve or summarize them into three or four categories. Our purpose is not to be bogged down with taxonomical commitments but rather to acquire a cognitive toolbox to be used in dealing with doubts.[1]

The follow diagram outlines our eight components:



Ontology: Ontology is the study of being and relates to the essence of things. Hence, it has to do with what exists and what does not exist. When we ask questions like, "does the tree outside my window exist?" or " does this book exist?", we are asking questions that are ontological. Foundational ontological questions would be questions such as, "Do I exist?" or "Does God exist?" and such questions will have ramifications on how we interpret ethics, law, politics, sources of knowledge, etc.

Theology: If the answer to the question, "Does God exist?" is "yes", we then can speak about theology. Theology is the study of God. Theological topics are related to the nature of God and God's relationship to mankind. How a person understands God will have an effect on how they deal with trauma, how they would navigate deeper aspects of meaning within their lives and other questions of spirituality.

Epistemology: "How do you know that?" is a question your interlocutor might pose in the midst of a debate. This question is an epistemological one since epistemology is the study of what constitutes knowledge. To state it simply, epistemology is asking the question, "how do you know what you know?" Epistemological questions would deal with things like sources of knowledge, paths to knowledge and roots / foundations of knowledge. The word 'epistemology' is from an Ionic Greek term, 'epi'-, meaning over or near, and a Proto-Indo-European term, 'sta-', meaning to stand, make or be firm.[2] Thus, in a sense, it is to 'overstand' as compared to 'understand'. We 'understand' that the earth is round. How do we know the earth is round? Well, it is because we have read about it in books or seen pictures and videos i.e. we 'overstand' these sources of knowledge and deem them to be legitimate.

Anthropology: Generally, when we read the term, 'anthropology' our mind is taken to the academic field found in universities and colleges which deals with the broad topic of humanity and its' cultures, societies, linguistics, etc. However, for our purposes, as a component of a worldview, we are referring to anthropology as the study of the composition of the human being. This particular definition is closer to the linguistic roots of the word.[3]

Anthropological questions deal with what or who is man. Does man have a soul or is man just a composition of material elements? How do we understand consciousness? How does language play a part in what it means to be 'human'?

Teleology: The Encyclopedia Britannica states that teleology is an "explanation by reference to some purpose, end, goal or function."[4] When we speak about teleology therefore, we are speaking about purpose. A question like, "what is the purpose of the kidneys in the human body?" is a teleological question. However, from a worldview perspective, we are referring to deeper questions about man, life and the universe. Questions like, "Does the universe have a purpose?", "What is the meaning of life?", etc.

Morality / Ethics: You may have noticed in the diagram above that the components of a worldview seem to have a lighter shade as one moves down the list. Thus, ontology and epistemology are the darkest in their shading while aesthetics is the lightest. This is not a misprint. In addition to the hierarchy (theology being at top and aesthetics being at the bottom), this shading was done on purpose to signify the relative potency of each component of a worldview.

Morality/Ethics has to do with questions about right and wrong or good behavior and bad behavior. Is it wrong to marry a 9 year old girl? Is abortion good? Is euthanisia right? These types of inquiries are questions of morality or ethics. What is important to notice is where on the hierarchy of the components of a worldview do ethics and morality fall. Preceding questions of 'rightness' or 'wrongness' about abortion, same sex marriage, appropriate marriage age, etc., are our ideas concerning ontology, epistemology, anthropology and teleology. Our opinion about say, abortion, is informed by what we think about the existence of God, sources of knowledge, the human soul, and the overall purpose of life.

Law / Politics: Questions about what we consider just and unjust form the basis for law and politics. There is no doubt that these questions are informed by our moral and ethical stances which in turn are informed by our ontological, epistemological, anthropological and teleological positions.

Aesthetics: Aesthetics concerns what we find beautiful and how we perceive beauty. It may seem surprising to find aesthetics as a component of a worldview. However, what one considers beautiful is indicative of a person's underlying worldview commitments.

With this introduction to the components of a worldview fleshed out, there is one underlying question that may come to mind: How do I know Islam is the correct worldview?

[1] This categorization was adopted from Carl Sharif El-Tobgui. See DarusSalam, Masjid. "The Modern Worldview." Video. *YouTube*, December 25, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FsJ4SiGqug&list=WL&index=37&t=3816s.

For an alternate categorization of the components of a worldview, see Malkawi, Fathi Hasan. *Epistemological Integration: Essentials of an Islamic Methodology*. London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2014. Pg. 71-76

[2] See Etymology, origin and meaning of epistemology by etymonline. "Definition and Etymology of Epistemology." Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.etymonline.com/word/epistemology#etymonline_v_8792.

[3] "from Greek *anthrōpos* "man; human being" (including women), as opposed to the gods" See Meaning of prefix anthropo- by etymonline. "Definition and Etymology of Anthropo-." Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.etymonline.com/word/anthropo-.

[4] Encyclopedia Britannica. "Teleology." Accessed February 28, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/topic/teleology.

7. The Limits of Rationality

How does one properly conceptualize rationality? Does rationality have limits? If so, what are they? Can we rationally come to a conclusion about which worldview is true?

In May of 2015, a prominent American researcher, thinker and theologian of the Islamic sciences was visiting Singapore for a series of talks. He is renowned for his fiery eloquence and his ability to take complex issues of Islamic theo-philosophy and present them in palatable and easy to understand ways. In the question and answer session of a particular talk at the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, where he was speaking about his own personal intellectual journey spanning 20 years, a piercing question about rationality was asked: "Does every single doubt and question about Islam have a rational answer?" The question was couched in a tense air of frustration since in the midst of his lecture he had mentioned that even after studying in some of the most prestigious institutions both in the Islamic world and in the West for 20 years, he still had questions that could not be dealt with rationally.[1]

There is a question that must precede the question in question. Before we can ask, "Does every single doubt and question about Islam have a rational answer?", we need to ask, "Does every single doubt and question have a rational answer?" In other words, is there ANY worldview that will allow us to answer every single question on purely rational grounds? The answer is no. However, just because we cannot answer a question by way of rationality, doesn't automatically mean that the response will be irrational.

Generally, when people think about rationality, they assume that it works as a binary. Things are either rational or irrational. However, a better way of understanding rationality would be to categorize it into three categories: rational, irrational and supra-rational.

Something that is rational is something that is understood and it makes sense. Something that is irrational is something that makes no sense. For example, if someone came to you and said, "My friend, Ahmed, is a married bachelor." This is irrational because by definition a bachelor is someone who is not married and someone who is married is by definition not a bachelor. In terms of a logical principle, these two items are 'mutually exclusive' i.e. they cannot exist at the same time by definition.

Something that is supra-rational, is something that falls outside of the realm of rationality. Continuing with our example above, imagine that after you politely explain to the person who said that he has a friend who is a married bachelor that that is not possible, that person says, "Well, I believe it is possible. Why can't two opposite things exist at the same time?" What do you do now? How do you prove the logical principle? This logical principle of mutual exclusivity is "supra-rational" because you cannot prove the principle. You must assume it is true. The tool of rationality cannot prove or disprove the principle because it is 'outside' of rationality. At the same time, in order for rationality to work, one must rely on things that are supra-rational, otherwise rationality itself collapses. **Any logical system must have something outside of itself in order to work.** One cannot rationally prove things infinitely. There has to be a stopping point.

If one claims that one can rely on rationality ONLY, then they would find themselves in trouble. A rational proof is required or demanded when one doubts something. However, doubts cannot be extended infinitely. One cannot ask 'why?' (i.e. demanding a proof) ad infinitum. Think about the child who asks, "Dad, why can't I use the knife?" and the father responds, "because it will cut you" and the child asks, "why?" and the father says, "because it is sharp" and the child asks again, "why?" and the father responds, "because it was manufactured to be sharp" and the child asks, "why?" and so on. This line of questioning cannot go on infinitely. At a certain point, the father will have to respond, "because that's just the way it is!"

In philosophical terms, these items that lie 'outside' of rationality (i.e. items housed in the supra-rational) are called 'basic beliefs' or 'axioms' or 'axiomatic truths' or 'first principles'. Without these items, a person is left intellectually ungrounded. Take, for example, the existence of the world around you. Is it real? Is it possible that there is some mad scientist in a laboratory and he merely has your brain in a vat and is tinkering with the neurons in your mind to make you perceive the world as real? We take the existence of the world around us as being real, even though there is no way to rationally prove it. It is a basic belief without which we could not function.

Someone may contend and state that our curiosity and skepticism allowed us to progress in many fields. There is no doubt that questioning things and rational inquiry are essential for intellectual development, whether we are talking about individuals or collectively as a society. However, there is a difference between healthy skepticism, one that recognizes that rationality has its limits and radical skepticism which assumes that rationality has no limits. Radical skepticism puts forth the idea that we are to question everything, literally. Adopting radical skepticism as one's paradigm is problematic for two reasons. First, it leads to intellectual paralysis. If a person doubts everything, then they have to doubt their own doubt which tantamount to a cognitive gridlock. Second, no person can practically function in life under radical skepticism. Any mundane challenge in life would become insurmountable under such a paradigm. Consider, for example, answering your phone. The phone rings, you look at the ID and it reads "Mom". You answer the phone and the voice on the other end says, "Hi dear, I am in a bit of trouble. My car broke down on the side of the road. Could you please come and pick me up?" Under radical skepticism, this entire scenario would need to be questioned. When the phone rang, how do you know it rang? How can you prove the sound was actually from the phone? Even though the ID showed "Mom", how do you know it is your mom? How do you know the voice on the other end is, in fact, your mom? How can you prove this? The absurdity of such a thought process is clear.

Someone making the claim that they can rationally prove everything (without the need for the supra-rational) is like a person who comes to you and says, "I have the perfect solvent. It can dissolve anything." This 'perfect' solvent, however, would still need a bottle to be kept in. Rationality is an amazing 'solvent' that 'solves' many things but we still need a 'bottle' (the supra-rational) to keep it in.

Thus, no person, no matter what their worldview (and remember everyone has a worldview) can do without the supra-rational. Every worldview has first principles that are unprovable yet must exist and be accepted, as Daniel Hill and Randal Rauser write,

"One can think of a worldview as comprising a number of basic beliefs which are philosophically equivalent to the axioms of the worldview considered as a logical or consistent theory. These basic beliefs cannot, by definition, be proven (in the logical sense) within the worldview – precisely because they are axioms, and *are typically argued from rather than argued for.* However their coherence can be explored philosophically and logically."[2]

Under Islamic parlance, the supra-rational can loosely be equated to something called the 'Fiṭrah'.

[1] Qadhi, Yasir. "Does Every Single Doubt & Question about Islam Have a Rational Answer? ~ Dr. Yasir Qadhi." Video. *YouTube*, September 30, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZ3rOXCBmYQ&t=77s.

[2] See Entry under "Worldview", Hill, Daniel J., and Randal D. Rauser. *Christian Philosophy A-Z*. Philosophy A-Z, 2006.

8. The Fiṭrah: "Original Normative Disposition"

Up to this point we have introduced 'fiṭrah' vis-a-vie our understanding of rationality. However, the fiṭrah is conceptually broader than the supra-rational. This is because, while it includes axioms such as logical principles (which are not proven but argued from as a starting point), it also includes phenomena that we directly recognize and experience. These phenomena do not fall in the domain of rationality and include such items as our perception of natural beauty, the 'pleasure' of moving poetry or the moral injustice of theft.

Let us present an example to elucidate the point. Imagine you wake up early before the break of dawn. You travel with a friend to a mountaintop. The weather is warm and there is a light comfortable breeze. As you sit down and watch the sunrise, you are in a state of awe. You turn to your friend and say, "Isn't it beautiful?" and he responds, "Nah..it's really ugly. Prove to me rationally that that sunrise is beautiful." Obviously, this would be an absurd request. The sunrise being beautiful is a phenomenon that is experienced and not a syllogism that can be constructed and argued for. In the Islamic paradigm we would say that the perception of the beauty of the sunrise and the subsequent experience of awe are part of the fiṭrah.

A translation of the Arabic word, 'fiṭrah'proves challenging since there does not seem to be a word to word equivalent in the English language. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the breadth, scope and meaning of the term, we will need to present a working definition. The fiṭrah can be defined as the "original normative disposition" of the human being.[1] Let us expound upon each word of this working definition.

"Original"

The word fiṭrah comes from the Arabic triliteral stem fa-ṭa-ra which means, "to split, cleave, break apart."[2] The meaning is linked to 'origination' since it would refer to the nāb (tooth) of a baby camel cleaving the gum.[3] The Qur'an employs this aspect of the meaning, i.e. to originate by cleft, in the verse,

"Can there be any doubt about God, Originator of the heavens and earth?"[4]
The word translated as 'Originator' is 'Fāṭir' and it refers to the attribute of God who creates ex nihilo or "creates out of nothing".

"Normative"

Normativity here is referring to the way something should be or the natural baseline that one would compare to in order to understand what would be considered deviant or abnormal. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said,

"No child is born but that he is upon the fitrah. His parents make him a Jew, or a Christian, or Magian. As an animal delivers a child with limbs intact, do you detect any flaw?"[5]

The reference to the new born child of an animal with its limbs intact is the natural baseline (i.e. normative) of how an animal should be and hence, the statement is followed by the question, "do you detect any flaw?"

"Disposition"

Disposition refers to the natural inclination of the human being related to God's existence or recognition, His worship and some basic intuitive morals. The Qur'an indicates this,

"So direct your face toward the dīn, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fiṭrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah . That is the correct dīn, but most of the people do not know."[6]

There are two main views about this 'disposition' of the fiṭrah:

The fiṭrah contains primary, inborn knowledge of: God's existence, that He deserves to be worshiped, and some basic morals or

The fiṭrah does not contain knowledge, rather it directs one towards the truth i.e. a 'potency' disposed towards the recognition of God, primed to worship Him.

Awakening the Truth Within

The fiṭrah is impacted by a number of factors. These factors include one's upbringing, a person's environment, one's engaging with immoral acts, etc. Whichever view about 'disposition' one adopts, it is clear that these factors will impact the functioning of the fiṭrah. One can imagine these factors "clouding" or covering the fiṭrah. In the context of dealing with destructive doubts, the objective then is to "uncloud" the fiṭrah and awaken the truth within the human being. This can be done in a number of ways including exposure to revelation, rational arguments, spirituality, reflection and experiences.[7]

[1] El-Tobgui, Carl Sharif. Ibn Taymiyyah on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar' Ta'arud Al-'aql Wa-l-Naql. Islamic Philosophy, Theology a, 2019., pg. 228

[2] Wehr, Hans, and J. Milton Cowan. Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (English and Arabic Edition). Snowballpublishing.com, 2020., pg. 842

[3] See Lane, Edward William. Arabic-English Lexicon, 1872. Pg. 2470 under entry فطره

[4] القرآن الكريم. "Surat 'Ibrahim [14:10] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/14/10.

[5] Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

[6] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Ar-Rum [30:30] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/30/30.

[7] For further details about 'Awakening the Truth Within' see the Sapience Institute course of the same title which can be found at: https://learn.sapienceinstitute.org/courses/awakening-the-truth-within/

9. The Nature of the Heart & Its Main Corrupters

The central locus of where doubts attack is the spiritual heart. The centrality of the heart is highlighted by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ,

"Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh, which, if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. Truly, it is the heart."[1]

The Arabic word for heart is 'qalb' which comes from the root meaning 'to turn over' or 'to turn upside down'. The heart, thus is always in a state of motion and being impacted on one hand, by the calling of the spirit (rūh) and the fiṭrah towards the Divine and on the other hand, being called by the physical, base desires towards the ephemeral world.

The desired state of the heart is to be strong in the sense that the fiṭrah is sound (i.e. not 'clouded over'). When this sound fiṭrah is coupled with a clear and properly functioning intellect, the result is certainty and a heart that is tranquil due to this certainty. This state of heart is what is desired on the day of judgment, as Allah mentions in the Qur'an,

"The Day when neither wealth nor children can help. But only one who comes to God with a sound heart..."[2]

The main corrupters of the heart fall into two broad categories. Shahawāt which are one's base desires and Shubuhātwhich are destructive doubts.

Every human has base desires. We all have a desire to eat, sleep, drink, procreate, etc. However, the concept of shahawātrefers to when we lose control of our desires and they lead to negative consequences upon the heart. For example, procreation is a natural desire. To fulfill one's desire with their spouse is praiseworthy under the Islamic worldview. However, a person who is overcome with sexual desires to the point that they don't care how they fulfill their desire (maybe being so overtaken by their desire that they rape a person!), this is what would come under the rubric of shahawāt.

Shubuhāt is the plural of the word 'shubhah'. The triliteral root of the word, sh-b-h refers to things resembling one another or things being con-similar to such a degree that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. Doubts that affect your īmān are called shubuhāt because as Al-Fayyūmi states, "...a shubhah is called so because it resembles (tushbihu) the truth."[3]

Ibn Taymiyyah elucidates this further,

"Every significant belief usually contains an element of truth (shubhah min al ḥaqq), since if that wasn't the case, such views would not have circulated..."[4]

We can compare the insidious nature of shubuhāt to a wolf in sheep's clothing. Shubuhāt pose as the truth with the intent to attack the heart and suck the īmān out like parasites. As such it would be insufficient to merely refer to them as doubts. Rather they are destructive doubts.

Comparing shahawāt (base desires) to shubuhāt (destructive doubts), Ibn Qayyim states the following:

"Fitnah(i.e. Trial, tribulation, test) is of two types: the fitnah of Shubuhāt, this one being the greater of the two, and the fitnah of Shahawāt."[5]

Generally, shubuhāt will be more dangerous than shahawāt, as Ibn Qayyim mentions. However, prolonged shahawāt could lead to shubuhāt, which makes them very dangerous. In other words, a person could be engaged in practicing a sinful desire and initially feel that they are doing something wrong. As time goes on however, a person cannot remain in a state where they feel like they are doing something morally wrong. In order to settle the cognitive dissonance, they may start presenting rational reasons to themselves that in fact, their sinful desire isn't sinful or wrong at all. Thus they move from desire to doubt.

[1] *Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*

[2] *القرآن الكريم.* "Surat Ash-Shu`ara' [26:88-89] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. *https://legacy.quran.com/26/88-89.*

[3] *al Miṣbāḥ al Munīr: 1/358*

[4] *Jāmi' ar-Rasā'il 2/401*

[5] *Ibn Qayyim, Ighāthatu Lafān Masāyidush-Shaytān*

10. Sources of Doubts

Where do destructive doubts emanate from? In a 2016 survey study conducted by Yaqeen Institute, the author categorized the sources of doubts into three broad categories based upon respondents' answers to the survey questions.[1] These three categories are:

1. Moral and Social Concerns
2. Philosophical and Scientific Concerns
3. Personal Trauma

With regards to moral and social concerns, doubts can stem from a type of moral incongruence between one's adopted worldview and one's proclaimed worldview. Thus a person may find society saying X is moral while Islam might consider X immoral or vice versa. The following are some items that come under moral and social concerns:

1. Teachings about the role of women
2. The hypocrisy of religious people; that is, the nonreligious behavior of supposedly religious individuals
3. The bad things that people do in the name of religion
4. The intolerance that some religious people show toward other faiths
5. The way that religious people sometimes insist that there is only one "right" way to practice faith
6. The intolerance that some religious people show toward certain other people (e.g., homosexuals)

Philosophical and scientific concerns may generally fall in the domain of epistemology (refer to 'Components of a Worldview'). The following are some respondent concerns in this area:

1. The debate over Evolution (through natural selection) vs. Creation (through God)
2. Uncertainty over the existence of God
3. The problem of evil and unfair suffering in the world
4. Feeling that certain religious beliefs or practices do not make sense

Finally, in the Yaqeen Institute study, respondents mentioned personal trauma as a source for doubts. Some of their concerns were:

1. Finding that being religious does not make one happy
2. Not feeling welcomed in your faith community
3. The death of a loved one

Personal trauma can cause doubts by way of cognitive distortions. We will expound upon this later in Part II, under the eighth strategy, 'Dealing with Trauma'.

[1] Chouhoud, Youssef . "Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed March 29, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/modern-pathways-to-doubt-in-islam.

11. Strategy 1: Be Aware

The first strategy in dealing with destructive doubts is to be aware that they exist and that they are dangerous. This strategy (along with strategy #2 and #3) should be implemented before the destructive doubt has entered the heart and as such, falls under the famous idiom, "prevention is better than cure." Knowing that something presents a danger and that it exists allows you to not be a victim to its evil. It behooves us to understand that shubuhāt attack the heart and are like parasites that suck imān out of the heart. Having an awareness of this fact should lead a person to be vigilant in guarding their heart.

It is well known that many of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would be greatly concerned about certain diseases of the heart. For example, when it came to the disease of nifāq (hypocrisy), the companion 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who was the second khalifa after the death of the Prophet ﷺ, was worried about this particular disease in his heart. Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ was privy to the identity of hypocrites known to the Prophet and when 'Umar found out, he asked her, "by Allah, am I among them?". She replied in the negative.[1]

This worry for one's heart and being on guard against anything affecting it is also reflected in many suplications of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. For example,

"Oh Turner of hearts, make firm our hearts upon your dīn"[2]

The Qur'an mentions that the Prophet Ibrahīm supplicated to God to protect him and his progeny from the worship of idols:

And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this city [Makkah] secure and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols.[3]

This is indicative of the Prophet Ibrahim's concern for the state of the heart and that which can affect it i.e. the inclination to worship other than God.

In summary, be aware and do not take shubuhāt lightly!

[1] *See Musnad Imam Ahmad, #26549*

[2] *Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, pg. 1397, #6418*

[3] *القرآن الكريم. "Surat 'Ibrahim [14:35] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 22, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/14/35.*

12. Strategy 2: No Attention

Once we have understood and are aware of the dangers of destructive doubts, our next strategy is to stay clear of them and not pay attention to them. If you know, for instance, that a certain youtuber is an ex-Muslim who constantly speaks about doubts concerning the Qur'an, the Sīrah, Islamic law, etc. then stay away from that person's channel. This was the advice that was given to the scholar, Ibn Qayyim by his teacher, the 14th century erudite polymath, Ibn Taymiyyah, as Ibn Qayyim himself writes,

"After I began to present to him one allegation after another, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah be pleased with him, advised me as follows: 'Do not allow your heart to be a sponge for every doubt and allegation so that it drinks them up and is moistened with nothing else. Instead, make your heart like solid glass; doubts pass over its surface but do not settle on the inside. Thus, the doubts are seen through the clearness of the glass, but are repelled by its firmness. Otherwise, if you allow your heart to drink every doubt you encounter, it will end up affirming them,' Or he said something to that effect. I do not know of any advice that has brought me greater benefit in fending off doubts than this one."[1]

Thus, if one is susceptible to destructive doubts affecting their heart then it only makes sense to avoid exposure to shubuhāt until one's heart is strong enough to deal with them. It must be remembered that this is not giving credence to destructive doubts as if they are valid or have an intellectual basis. They are NOT valid and do NOT have an intellectual basis because they only resemble ('tushbihu') the truth but are not the truth. Remember, shubuhāt are not strong. We just have weak hearts.

The avoidance of factors that would undermine one's imān is clearly articulated by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In many strongly corroborated eschatological ḥadīth reports, the Prophet speaks about the coming of the False Messiah (al-Masīḥ ad-Dajjāl). The False Messiah is the greatest tribulation that could potentially decimate a person's imān as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ states,

"Nothing between the creation of Adam until the establishment of the Hour is a greater tribulation than the affair of the False Messiah."[2]

The advice from the Prophet regarding such a tribulation is the following,

"Whoever hears news of the False Messiah, let him flee from him. By God, a man will go to him considering himself a believer, but will instead follow him because of doubts he will present."[3]

Thus, we can see that the Prophetic advice is to run away from destructive doubts, especially if we recognize that our heart is too weak to handle the flood of shubuhāt presented to it (as would be the case with the advent of the False Messiah).

If one finds that the heart is at the beginning stages of exposure to destructive doubts, just before the doubt has settled in and started its pillaging of one's imān, this strategy would take on an additional component. Not only should a person stop and turn away from the situation that is causing destructive doubts, but also they should seek the protection of Allāh and affirm their belief in Allāh. This has been expounded upon by the Prophet ﷺ in the following narration:

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, "Satan will come to one of you and he will say, 'Who created this and that?' until he says to him, 'Who created your Lord?' When it comes to this, let him seek refuge in God and stop such thoughts." In another narration, the Prophet said, "Let him say: I have faith in God."[4]

Again, it must be remembered that shubuhāt are not strong but rather it is our hearts that are weak. Even in this case where the Prophet ﷺ is mentioning a doubt regarding a creative chain of events, it is noteworthy that he did not offer a syllogistic response highlighting the impossibility of an infinite regress of creative processes[5]*, but instead put forth a spiritual cure i.e. seeking refuge in God and affirming one's belief in God.*

[1]> *Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim al-. مفتاح دار السعادة و منشور ولاية العلم و الارادة.* Vol. 1. Mecca: *Dar Alam al-Fawa'id*, 2010. , *Pg.* 395

[2] *Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2946

[3] *Sijistānī, Abū Dāʾūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath. Sunan Abu Dawud:* 4319 (*Ṣaḥīḥ*)

[4] *Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī:* 3102. *Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 134

[5] *For more on this, see Tzortzis, Hamza Andreas. The Divine Reality: God, Islam and The Mirage of Atheism (Newly Revised Edition). Sapience Institute, 2019., Pg.* 110-112

13. Strategy 3: Make the Distinction

Imagine taking a long walk through the forest and getting lost. You desperately walk further and further in the hope that you can catch a signal on your mobile phone to help you navigate your way back to where you parked your car. You finally find a patch where the signal picks up and it shows that you are miles away from your car. As you start your long walk back to your car, you realize that you are familished and that you didn't pack anything to eat. As you look around, you see various types of berries. One type of berry is bright red in color, has a distinct shine and seems like it would be very satisfying to eat. You see another group of berries and they are dark purple in color and also look very appealing. You imagine that either of these berries would offer a tantalizing burst of flavor in the mouth, being simultaneously sweet and refreshing. There is yet another group of berries but these berries are of a drab purple color and seem like they would taste quite dull.

The first group of red berries are called 'chokecherries'. The second group of dark purple berries are called 'pokeweed' and the last group of drab purple berries are in fact not berries but grapes. Chokecherries and pokeweed are poisonous berries. The point here is that an inability to make the distinction between chokecherries, pokeweed and regular grapes could have serious ramifications. Such is also the case if we fail to make the distinction between whisperings (waswâs), valid questions and shubuhât.

Whisperings (Waswâs)

Whisperings are thoughts that you do not agree with, do not believe and have a psychological aversion towards. In an article titled, 'Clinicians, Imams, and the Whisperings of Satan', Najwa Awad defines waswasah (whispering) as follows: "*Waswasah* consists of intrusive thoughts that cause cognitive dissonance (mental distress due to contradictory beliefs, values, or thoughts), and poses a risk to a person's spiritual and psychological homeostasis."[1]

Whisperings can occur in a number of different domains (Awad categorizes them into three: acts of worship/ibadah, purity/taharah and belief/aqeedah) but for our purposes of dealing with destructive doubts, the domain in question is that of belief or faith. These intrusive thoughts that cause cognitive instability are recognized by the sufferer as problematic. The very recognition of the intrusive thoughts being problematic is a sign of faith as is mentioned in the following ḥadīthreport:

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Some of the companions of the Messenger of Allah, came to the Prophet and said to him, 'We find in ourselves thoughts that are too terrible to speak of.' He said, 'Are you really suffering from that?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'That is a clear sign of faith.'"[2]

Distinguishing between a whispering and an actual destructive doubt has to do with the stance of the fundamentals of Islām in the heart (this is also the case in distinguishing between a valid question and a destructive doubt). If one is subject to intrusive thoughts that one does not agree with, one does not believe and has a psychological aversion towards, then these are whisperings that are in fact a sign of faith. On the other hand, if one is unsure about the fundamentals of the Islamic faith, this would be categorized as a destructive doubt. Awad provides an excellent analogy to elucidate this point:

"An analogous example for *waswâs al-qahri*[3]> regarding *aqeedah* is postpartum OCD in which new mothers have intrusive thoughts about harming their child. The vast majority of mothers—if not all—love their children and do not want to harm them.[4] Mothers with postpartum OCD don't clandestinely have desires to hurt their children, and in fact, it is love for their children that causes distress when the intrusive thoughts cannot be controlled. The same applies to *waswâs al-qahri* in *aqeedah* in that the person's devotion to God is part of what causes the distress when experiencing intrusive negative thoughts about religion."[5]

The Prophetic advice when one is subjected to whisperings is to not act upon them and not speak about them:

It is narrated from Abu Hurayra (may Allah be pleased with him), who ascribed it back to the Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) that he said, "'Truly, Allah has overlooked for my Ummah that which is whispered, or that which is thought about in the lower self, as long as they do not act upon it, or speak about it."[6]

Valid Questions

Valid questions are not doubts that undermine your belief or lead you to distort Islām in some way. They are also not intrusive thoughts or whisperings. Rather, they are sincere questions coming from a vantage point of trying to understand a concept or phenomenon, all the while not doubting the fundamentals of Islām. The act of questioning and seeking clarification are in fact encouraged in the Islāmic worldview. The Qur'an states the following:

"So ask the people of knowledge (dhikr), if you do not know."[7]
The companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would ask a range of questions related to theological issues, matters of Islamic law, ethics, etc. as is evidenced by the frequent phrase found in the Qur'an, "yas'alūnaka" ("They ask you concerning...").

Valid questions can even be about the fundamentals of Islām (e.g. the existence of God, the veracity of the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the truth claims of the Qur'an, etc.). So long as they do not undermine the fundamentals of Islām or lead you to distort Islām, they are valid questions.

Let us present an example to clarify the distinction between a valid question and a destructive doubt. Assume you have two people who have a question about the existence of God, person A and person B. Person A inquires about the various rational, intuitive and spiritual means to establish the existence of God, not because they doubt the existence of God themselves but because they would like to be able to use that knowledge to invite others to Islām. Person B on the other hand, inquires about the various means to establish the existence of God because they are not sure if God exists or not. In this scenario, person A has asked a valid question while person B may be subject to destructive doubts.

Destructive Doubts (Shubuhāt)

If something is not a whispering and not a valid question, then it stands to reason that it is destructive doubt. Whisperings and valid questions do NOT undermine the fundamentals of Islām. The key identifier with regards to a destructive doubt is that it is a falsehood that DOES undermine the fundamentals of Islām or distorts Islām in some way. When one is unsure about the truth of the fundamentals of Islām, they may be subject to shubuhāt. In this case, one or more of the other nine strategies would need to be employed to deal with the destructive doubt.

[1] *Awad, Najwa. "Clinicians, Imams, and the Whisperings of Satan." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed March 22, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/clinicians-imams-and-the-whisperings-of-satan.*

[2] *Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*

[3] *waswâs al-qahri refers to 'overwhelming whisperings' or 'extreme whisperings'*

[4] *International OCD Foundation, and Jonathan Abramowitz. "Postpartum OCD Fact Sheet," 2009. https://iocdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Postpartum-OCD-Fact-Sheet.pdf.*

[5] *Awad, Najwa. "Clinicians, Imams, and the Whisperings of Satan." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed March 22, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/clinicians-imams-and-the-whisperings-of-satan.*

[6] *Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

[7] *القرآن الكريم. "Surat An-Nahl [16:43] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 23, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/16/43.*

14. Strategy 4: Your Environment

Cheesecake factory. It is a restaurant known for its cheesecakes, obviously. The restaurant also serves appetizers and main courses and they are quite tasty. Let us commence our forth strategy with a thought experiment about the Cheesecake Factory. Assume you are working for a reputable financial services company and the busy fiscal quarter has just concluded. To celebrate the completion of what was a grueling fiscal quarter, your co-workers decide to go out to dinner at, you guessed it, Cheesecake Factory. As the day of the dinner arrives, you ponder deeply about what cheesecake you will be ordering. The various options run through your mind until you settle on what you believe to be the most scrumptious, delicious, flavorful cheesecake. Your 13 co-workers and yourself go to the Cheesecake Factory and enjoy an appetizing, hardy dinner and then that moment that you have been waiting for arrives. The waiter approaches your table and says, "Can I interest anyone in some dessert?" Some of your co-workers respond, "I'm really stuffed. I think I will pass," says one of your co-workers. Another follows, "Yea, I don't have any room for dessert." Slowly but surely, all 13 of your co-workers turn down dessert until the waiter finally approaches you. At this point you have to ask yourself whether you will be the one person to cut through the social pressure and say, "Yes, I will have this 2500 calorie cheesecake because I'm a glutton and proud of it!" It is more likely than not that you would capitulate and end up passing on the cheesecake. Such is the reality of how one's environment can affect them.

Your environment has a tremendous impact on your psycho-spiritual being and when it comes to dealing with destructive doubts, it can be the difference between succumbing to those doubts or navigating away from them. This is so because your environment, especially your social environment, deeply impacts you in two ways.

First, your social environment shapes your spiritual heart. As was mentioned earlier, the locus of attack for doubts is the heart. A diseased and weak heart is an easy prey for parasitic doubts. Diseases of the heart include such items as kibr (arrogance), 'ujub (self aggrandizement) , riya' (ostentation), hasad (blameworth jealousy), etc. These diseases impede the truth and facilitate shubuhāt in the heart. One of the main cures to these spiritual diseases is suhbah al-sāliḥīn (companionship of the righteous). Thus, one's social environment has a direct impact on the spiritual well being of the heart. We will expound upon this more when we revisit the heart in our ninth strategy, 'Focus on the Heart'.

The second way your environment impacts you is that it shapes you and your sense of belonging. Numerous studies in social psychology have examined the phenomenon of social conformity. (Think back to the Cheesecake Factory thought experiment). These studies bifurcate conformity into two categories: informational conformity and normative conformity.

Informational conformity is related to the desire to feel certain and usually occurs when a person lacks knowledge and looks to the dominant group for guidance. Under informational conformity a person internalizes the views of the dominant group and adopts them as an individual. This type of conformity is especially potent when a person is also part of a subgroup. For example, a marginally practicing Muslim might be surrounded by secular humanists or postmodernists at their college or university who make up the majority of the people that this person interacts with. This would constitute the dominant group while the other Muslims (perhaps at home or in the masjid) would be part of the subgroup. In such an environment, if this person lacks knowledge or is uncertain about the veracity of Islam, they could easily find themselve internalizing the worldview of the dominante group.

Normative conformity on the other hand, relates to the desire to belong and is manifest when a person finds themselves yielding to group pressure because they want to fit in with the dominant group. This type of conformity is generally limited to compliance, where a person publicly accepts the views of the dominant group but privately rejects them. However, such a state of cognitive dissonance between the worldview of the dominant group and the worldview of the subgroup needs to be settled and over the long term, the ideas of the subgroup can become dormant or no longer expressed in any form or fashion.[1] Thus, certainty and a sense of belonging need to be sought from the Muslim community.

Setting aside studies in social psychology, most people have an intuitive understanding of social conformity. If your son or daughter wants to play with a group of friends and you are fully aware that this group consists of individuals who like to smoke and drink and are extremely rude, you intuitively incline towards dissuading your child from befriending them. On the other hand, if you are familiar with a group of friends who are courteous in their mannerisms, serious about their school work and have a healthy home environment, you would encourage your child to be a part of this group.

Islamic source texts constantly bolster this intuitive understanding of social conformity in a number of ways. For example, many verses in the Qur'an mention the eschatological consequences of a negative, unhealthy social environment:

"And 'beware of' the Day the wrongdoer will bite his nails 'in regret ' and say, "Oh! I wish I had followed the Way along with the Messenger! Woe to me! I wish I had never taken so-and-so as a close friend."[2]

"Close friends will be enemies to one another on that Day, except the righteous."[3]

The Qur'an also provides general encouragement to keep righteous company:

"Do not mix truth with falsehood, or hide the truth when you know it. Keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, and bow your heads [in worship] with those who bow theirs."[4]

"And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes pass beyond them, desiring adornments of the worldly life, and do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever [in] neglect."[5]

In addition to the Qur'an, there are a number of authentic ḥadīth reports which provide encouragement to surround oneself with a healthy, righteous social environment:

"A person is upon the din of his close friend, so beware who you befriend."[6]

"The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows; from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your body or your clothes or you get a bad nasty smell thereof."[7]

"You will be with those whom you love."[8]

There are a number of benefits to keeping good company and surrounding oneself with a healthy social environment. Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo provides six detailed benefits[9] *which have been summarized below:*

Seeking pious friends and companions for the sake of Allah places one on the path to attaining Allah's love. As such, this person will *find shade on the day of judgment* as is narrated in the *following ḥadīth report:*

"Seven will be shaded by Allah on a day in which there is no shade save His shade... Two men who loved each other for the sake of Allah, coming together on that basis and parting from one another on that basis."[10]

Righteous friends can be a strong source of guidance and support, giving advice when most needed. It is common for people to go through periods of weakness and confusion and having a strong social support group consisting of righteous friends can help one navigate those tough times.

Pious friends can help identify one's shortcomings. Many times we do not notice certain aspects of ourselves that may be affecting our hearts or affecting others around us. A good friend, who is honest with you, can help you identify your psycho-spiritual blind spots. As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is reported to have said in an authentic narration:

"The believer is the believer's mirror and the believer's brother. He guards him against loss and protects him when he is absent."[11]

It is well known that people look to role models in formulating how to live their lives. A group of people who live their lives as closely as possible to the Prophetic practices, can serve to be excellent role models.
Connected to point number 4, when a group of people adopt Prophetic practices, they bring the teachings of Islam from an abstract and theorical level to a visible, practical and more understandable level.
Associating with an Islamically conscious group of people helps to bolster the Islamic worldview by reinvigorating one's purpose (teleology), refreshing one's conceptualization of the divine (theology) and fortifying the inevitable end (eschatology). This point is best summarized in the *following ḥadīth report:*

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was once asked, "Who is the best of those whom we should sit with?" He replied, "He whose sight reminds you of Allah, he whose speech increases your knowledge and he whose actions remind you of the hereafter"[12]

[1] See Mcleod, Saul. "What Is Conformity?" Simply Psychology. Accessed March 23, 2022. https://www.simplypsychology.org/conformity.html.

[2] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Furqan [25:27-28] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 23, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/25/27-28.

[3] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Az-Zukhruf [43:67] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 23, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/43/67.

[4] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Baqarah [2:42-43] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 23, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/2/42-43.

[5] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Kahf [18:28] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 23, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/18/28.

[6] Sijistānī, Abū Dā'ūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath. Sunan Abu Dawud

[7] Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

[8] Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim

[9] See Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din M. *Purification of the Soul: Concept, Process and Means*. Al-Basheer Publications & Translations, 2002., Pg.357-362

[10] Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

[11] Sijistānī, Abū Dā'ūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath. Sunan Abu Dawud. *Graded 'hasan' by al-Albaani*

[12] *Recorded by Abu Yala. For a detailed discussion of the veracity of this narration,* see Zarabozo, Jamaal al-Din M. *Purification of the Soul: Concept, Process and Means*. Al-Basheer Publications & Translations, 2002., Footnote 1, *page 361*

15. Strategy 5: Study Islam

Imagine walking into a dark room with very little lighting. In the corner of the room you spot an object but you are unsure of what it is. It seems to be an animal of some sort and perhaps you just saw it move? Maybe this is a violent animal who is patiently waiting for the right moment to pounce upon you. Should you run? Should you slowly walk away? As you are contemplating all of this, someone hits the light switch and the light turns on in the room. Low and behold what you were looking at was nothing more than a harmless teddy bear. Your shift from a state of trepidation to a state of calm was due to the light in the room that allowed you to correctly observe the reality of what you were seeing.

Our fifth strategy in dealing with destructive doubts is to study Islam. Many times we could experience doubts about Islam due to nothing more than not having the suitable level of knowledge about an issue. In a sense, we are lacking the appropriate amount and intensity of 'light'. When the issue is 'brought to light', clarity ensues and calm enters the heart. It is not of little consequence that the Qur'an employs the metaphor of light to signify this phenomenon in various way across numerous passages:

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.[1] The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things."[2]

"O mankind, there has come to you a conclusive proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear light."[3]

"O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book."[4]

In the physical sense, light would be useless if we had malfunctioning eyes and/or no consciousness that could perceive sight. Visual clarity is only possible when one has a functioning ocular device coupled with appropriate light. If we extend the metaphor of light into the domain of understanding truth, we can say that one not only needs 'light' (i.e. correct knowledge) but also a properly functioning 'device'. The 'device' in question here is the spiritual heart, which according to the Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition is where one perceives truth through a dynamic interplay of the rūḥ (soul), nafs (self) , 'aql (rational) and fitrah (original normative disposition).

As such, when we speak about studying Islam, it is unlike studying any other subject since it not only involves cognition but also a spiritual disposition. That is why when we reflect upon the Islamic source texts we find that whenever knowledge is mentioned conceptually, it is linked to spirituality in one way or another. For example, the spiritual experience of 'khashya' (awe) is linked to knowledge in the following verse:

"Of all of Allah's servants, only the knowledgeable are 'truly' in awe of Him. Allah is indeed Almighty, All-Forgiving."[5]

It is not only spiritual experiences (e.g. awe, hope in God's mercy, fear of the hereafter, etc.) but also spiritual acts that are tied to knowledge as is indicated in the following verse:

"Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding."[6]

We see that when we speak about studying Islam, we are speaking about an exercise where there is a symbiotic relationship between spirituality and knowledge. This path of building spirituality upon knowledge and increasing knowledge by way of deeper spirituality is key in attaining truth and certainty and it is the means by which one dismantles shubuhāt:

"In fact, We hurl the truth against falsehood, and it destroys it, and it quickly vanishes."[7]

Ibn Qayyim comments on the dismantling of shubuhāt:

"Regarding the fitna of shubuhāt, this is due to having a weak vision and a lack of knowledge... This fitna is sometimes a result of incorrect understanding, misinformation..."[8]

Let us present a case study to see how knowledge can elucidate the reality of an issue that if left unchecked, may culminate into a destructive doubt.

Case Study: Women inherit less than Men.

The claim that Islamic inheritance laws favor males over females is quite diffuse in our current global milieu. For example, in an opinion piece in the New York Times titled, "Can Muslim Feminism Find a Third Way?", Ursula Lindsey writes,

"In Muslim countries, laws governing inheritance are derived from verses in the Quran; men generally receive larger, sometimes double, the shares that women get. Distant male relatives can supersede wives, sisters and daughters, leaving women not just bereaved but also destitute."[9]

Before proceeding with a thorough analysis of this claim, we need to ask about the broader motivations that form the backdrop to such a claim. In other words, what are the philosophical assumptions that this claim is used to bolster? This claim is in essence trying to support the assertion that females are valued less than males in the Islamic paradigm and as such, the Islamic paradigm is inherently unjust and therefore, is false or at very least, needs revision. With this backdrop in mind, let us proceed with our analysis.

The claim that Islamic inheritance laws favor males over females is derived from a part of a verse of the Qur'an which begins:

"Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male, what is equal to the share of two females..."[10]

It would seem, after a casual reading of this part of a verse of the Qur'an that indeed, males inherit more than females. However, there are a number of problems with such a conclusion. First, it is not true that males ALWAYS inherit more than females. Second, the conclusion is based upon an incomplete reading of the entire verse and other source texts that make up the body of Islamic inheritance law. Third, the incomplete reading of the verse leads to discounting the sophistication of Islamic inheritance law which is tasked to deal with a number of familial scenarios. Fourth, there is a hidden assumption that the valuation of a male or female is primarily based upon a monetary yardstick.

Do males always inherit more than females? In fact, under Islamic inheritance law, there exist only 4 scenarios in which a female inherits less than a male compared to the 16 scenarios where a female inherits more than a male. In addition, there are at least 10 scenarios where a female inherits the same share as a male.

The allocation of shares is based upon a number of criteria. One of these criteria has to do with familial proximity to the deceased. Thus, for example, shares will be less for the niece of the deceased as compared to the daughter of the deceased. Another criterion has to do with the generational position of the heirs. For example, the daughter of the deceased will inherit more than the grandmother of the deceased as there is only one generation between the daughter and the deceased father while there are two generations between the deceased father and his grandmother.

Yet another criterion has to do with financial burden and obligations. There is a social hierarchy in the Islamic milieu where financial rights and responsibilities are delineated. Under such a milieu, generally the male has greater financial obligations than the female and this is reflected in how shares are allocated in Islamic inheritance law. Consider the following: It is the financial responsibility of the father to provide for his wife and the wider family. On the other hand, the wife is entitled to her husband's wealth while at the same time, her personal wealth is her own and she has complete autonomy over it. Thus, a portion of the inheritance received by the father, if not all in certain circumstances, is to be used to support his wife and the wider family. Receipt of inheritance by the wife, in contrast, is free of familial obligations tied to it and she can spend the inheritance as she pleases. Thus, part of the wisdom behind discrepancies of amounts received between males and females has to do with the division of financial burdens and rights.

[1] In this passage, it starts off by saying that Allah is the 'Light of the heavens and the earth' which refers to Allah being the source of the light of guidance to distinguish truth from falsehood. This is mentioned in the exegesis of the verse by the early 9th century exegete, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, who justifies this understanding of the verse by linking it to the preceding verse ("And We have certainly sent down to you clear verses and examples from those who passed on before you and an admonition for those who fear Allah."). See Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn. "Tafsīr Surat Al-Nur [24:34-35]." Altafsir.com. Accessed March 24, 2022. https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=24&tAyahNo=35&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1.

[2] القرآن الكريم. "Surat An-Nur [24:35] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/24/35.

[3] القرآن الكريم. "Surat An-Nisa' [4:174] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/4/174.

[4] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Ma'idah [5:15] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/5/15.

[5] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Fatir [35:28] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/35/28.

[6] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Az-Zumar [39:9] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/39/9.

[7] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-'Anbya' [21:18] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/21/18.

[8] Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim al-. Ighāthatu Lafān Masāyidush-Shaytān, n.d.

[9] Lindsey, Ursula. "Opinion." The New York Times, April 11, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/opinion/islam-feminism-third-way.html.

[10] القرآن الكريم. "Surat An-Nisa' [4:11] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 24, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/4/11.

16. Strategy 6: Critical Thinking

Recall that shubuhāt only resemble the truth but are not the truth in and of themselves. As such, they do not have any real intellectual foundational basis. One way to expose the fault lines of destructive doubts is by way of critical thinking. Critical thinking is the proper utilization of one's cognitive faculties such that one is able to identify fallacies in reasoning when issues or concepts are presented. To put it simply, critical thinking is the proper use of one's mind. When we use our minds properly, we protect ourselves from falling into errors in reasoning, such as logical fallacies. Our sixth strategy, therefore, is about how we can use our cognitive faculties to uncover the intellectual weaknesses of destructive doubts.

The importance of critical thinking as a strategy in dealing with shubuhāt should not be underestimated. Some years ago, a person contacted Hamza Tzortzis, the founder of Sapience Institute, about a doubt they had been exposed to related to the Higgs Boson. At the time, the Higgs Boson had recently been discovered and there was much clamor about this 'God particle'. Basically, the idea is that if there was no Higgs Boson, then nothing would exist since it is the Higgs Boson that gives all particles (with the exception of the photon) their mass. Without this mass, particles would aimlessly be floating around everywhere and nothing would exist. The implications of this discovery among the general populace was that we now had a basis for all of material reality. Hence, the particle was touted in the media as the 'God particle'. [1]

Tzortzis was contacted by a person who said that this discovery of the Higgs Boson had shattered their faith and that their īmān was "on the edge of a cliff" because how could we now believe that God exists? This person needed to take a step back, think critically, and ask the question, "how does this negate the existence of God?" The discovery of this particle that makes up this field is indicative of the power and will of God. In fact, any physical phenomenon, whether it's the Higgs Boson or it is a chair, a table, or a mountain, can serve as a rational proof for God's existence since all physical phenomena are contingent . By 'contingent' we mean that they did not have to exist and as such they are not 'necessary'. It is logically possible for them to have not existed.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition these items are called 'mumkin al-wujūd' or 'possibly existing' since it is possible that they could have *not* existed. Now, the mark of a rational mind is to question that which did *not* have to be. Any physical phenomena, whether we are talking about the Higgs Boson, chairs, mobile phones, energy fields, particles, did not have to exist and they could have existed in a different form or not existed at all. Therefore, these physical phenomena require an explanation external to them because they don't explain their own existence and they don't explain their own limited form. This explanation external to them ultimately has to be 'wajib al-wujūd' or 'necessarily existing'. To state it in a different way, God necessarily exists since you cannot have an infinite chain of items that require an explanation external to themselves. [2]

This application of the contingency argument is possible when one thinks critically about the 'challenge' that the Higgs Boson presents and once one does so, they can come to the conclusion that not only does the discovery of the Higgs Boson not negate the existence of God but in reality, it affirms the existence of God.

Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Art of Using Your Brain

Definitions of critical thinking correspond to generating, defending, and challenging arguments or claims. So to critically think, you should be able to generate strong arguments, defend arguments, and challenge weak or false arguments. In the context of generating good arguments we should avoid errors in our reasonıng, and these errors in our reasoning are typically referred to as 'logical fallacies'. In the context of challengıng weak arguments we should be able to recognize logical fallacies.

As an introduction, it is important to keep in mind that an argument consists of premises (or statements) and a conclusion. The premises are the reasons people provide as to why they believe something or not. Fallacious arguments often have false premises. Premises can be challenged as there may be false assumptions behind them. Conclusions can also be challenged if one finds there is no logical link between the premises and the conclusion.

Safaruk Chowdhury explains these concepts as follows:

"In a debate, the debating parties make knowledge **claims**. These claims are justified by articulating **arguments**. An argument in the technical (philosophical) sense refers to a set of **statements** that serve as **premises** leading to a **conclusion**. So, we have

CLAIM: justified by an argument

ARGUMENT: a set of premises that lead to a conclusion.

Here is an example:

Argument #1:

1. If the Qur'an is the inimitable word of Allah, then the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ spoke the truth.
2. The Qur'an is the inimitable word of Allah.
3. Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ spoke the truth.

Sentences 1 and 2 are the premises and sentence 3 is the conclusion. If the premises are true, the conclusion is true."[3]

To put it simply, an argument consists of a set of statements (premises) that lead to a conclusion. When analyzing an argument there are generally two types of logical fallacies that can occur: formal fallacies and informal fallacies.

Formal fallacies concern errors in logic i.e. a flaw in the structure of the argument which renders it invalid. These types of fallacies occur when the conclusion does not logically follow from the premises or is not supported by them. The premises may be true, but do not spawn the stated conclusion. For example,

Premise 1: All cows are omnivores

Premise 2: All rabbits are omnivores

Conclusion: Therefore, all cows are rabbits.

Informal fallacies have to do with errors in reasoning. These fallacies have a flaw in the content of the argument rather than the logical form of the argument. Most often they involve irrelevant information or assumptions related to the premises that are weak, unjustified or false. When you examine the information or the assumptions and show them to be weak, unjustified or false, it breaks down the whole argument. Let us take some examples of informal fallacies.[4]

Example 1: Appeal to accomplishment

This is when an argument or claim is advanced (mainly to silence the opponent) based on merely the credentials of the one making the argument and not on the merits of the argument or claim. It takes the following form:

- – p is true because the person making the claim that p is impeccably accomplished.
- – Therefore, p is true.

Example: Look, I have a PhD and published many papers, so believe me when I tell you that God doesn't exist.

Explanation: The truth of that claim does not depend on the credentials or achievements of the one making the claim. Otherwise we will have to say that someone with more credentials entails they make more truthful claims, which is clearly false. The person's claims have to be independently established with evidence.

Example 2: Appeal to consequences

This is where the speaker highlights a negative consequence of a particular proposition in order to try and show that the proposition in question is false. It takes the following form:

- – belief in p has negative consequences.
- – Therefore, p is false.

Example: Religion leads to disunity and war that is why I reject religion and this is exactly why it is false.

Explanation: Arguing that a belief is false because it leads to negative consequences is irrelevant to the truth claim of that belief. The consequences of a belief do not alone determine the truth value of that belief. Is my belief that atheism leads to nihilism (that life has no ultimate meaning or purpose, and that it can lead to rejecting objective morality) a valid argument to show that atheism is false?

Example 3: Hypothesis contrary to fact

This involves a speaker trying to prove something in the real world by invoking an imaginary or hypothetical example in the past. It takes the following form:

- – if A did not happen, B would have not happened

Example: If you were not born in a Muslim household or country, you would have not been Muslim.

Explanation: Perhaps. But it is equally possible that a someone being a Muslim is due to other factors, such as the evidence for Islam. Using imaginary hypotheticals is misleading because they do not establish anything about the real world.

Example 4: Notable effect fallacy

This occurs when a person asserts the truth of some claim purely based on someone's effort to explicate that claim. It takes the following form:

- – X has made considerable effort to prove that p.
- – Therefore, p is true.

Example: How can you deny this claim is true? Shaykh X wrote a whole book on the idea trying to show how it's valid. Therefore, it's a correct claim or idea!

Explanation: The fact that someone went to great lengths to expound on some idea, view or claim is not a reason to make that idea, claim or view true. What if a person went to even greater lengths to defend a contrary view, e.g. by spending their whole life on a claim and not just a few years on a single tome? Does that make their claim truer? No. Truth (or falsity) is not dependent on a person's effort or duration of effort but evidence and strength of justification.

Hopefully, with these examples, the concept of informal fallacies is clear. If you are interested in more about identifying fallacies, how to proceed in a debate, etc., please refer to Safaruk Chowdhury's book on the topic[5] as well as his course on the Sapience Institute online learning platform.[6]

Qur'anic Encouragement to Think Critically

The Qur'an encourages its reader to use their God given rational faculties. It encourages us to use our intellect, to ponder, to reflect, and to use our common sense. Not only is there encouragement to do so, but also the Qur'an rebukes people with regards to their errors in reasoning, and it exposes these errors in a very eloquent manner. This is very important to understand, because it would provide for us a theological, spiritual and intellectual motivation to take critical reasoning very seriously. Let us elucidate this with a few examples from the Qur'an (and there are many) followed by brief explanations of each.

In the 21st chapter of the Qur'an, it states:

"He rebuked 'them', "Do you then worship—instead of God—what can neither benefit nor harm you in any way?" "Shame on you and whatever you worship instead of God! Do you not have any sense?"[7]

These are very powerful verses. It is as if Allah is trying to say to us, "it is an error in reasoning to worship other than Allah, since nothing other than Allah can bring you ultimate benefit or bestow ultimate harm" In order to truly appreciate these verses, we need to take a brief foray into the meaning of the term 'worship'. 'Worship' means to know Allah, to love Allah, to obey Allah and to direct all acts of worship to Allah alone, whether we are referring to the internal acts of worship or the external acts of worship. These acts of worship include extensive praise and ultimate gratitude. Now something that is praised, one does so by virtue of its intrinsic attributes. If these attributes are deficient, then our extensive praise and ultimate gratitude is misplaced. The implication in the verse is that anything other than Allah is not maximally perfect and is therefore, deficient in some shape or form. In other words, it doesn't have perfect attributes. It is limited, it is lowly, and it is contingent. That thing that cannot benefit you or harm you is not the cause of your existence. It cannot give you anything, it cannot answer your supplications, and as such, it is not worthy of extensive praise or ultimate gratitude i.e. not worthy of

worship.

So, this powerful verse is exposing an error in reasoning related to worshiping other than Allah. This phenomenon, known as shirk, is fundamentally one of the greatest errors in our reasoning and Allah exposes this very eloquently in this verse.

Another example of the encouragement to think critically from the Qur'an is found in the 23rd chapter:

"God has never had ˹any˺ offspring, nor is there any god besides Him. Otherwise, each god would have taken away what he created, and they would have tried to dominate one another. Glorified is God above what they claim!"[8]

Allah is exposing an error in the reasoning of the polytheists because they claim there is more than one God. Our focus will be on the end of this verse, which is very powerful when Allah says that had there been more than one god, they would have tried to dominate one another. This provides the basis for a powerful argument for the oneness of Allah, which is the argument from exclusion.

Before unpacking the argument from exclusion, it should be noted that Allah is talking about the error in reasoning of the polytheists who are claiming that there is more than one God and Allah is saying if that was the case, they would want to try to dominate one another. This is a correct assumption about God, because God, by definition, is a being that has an absolute will. In other words, there is nothing external to God that limits His will.

This verse is the basis for the argument from exclusion which can be stated as follows. Imagine that, as the polytheists claim, there were two gods and they wanted to move a rock. This gives rise to three possible scenarios. In the first scenario, one god wants to move the rock to the left while the other god wants to move it to the right. If one of them dominates and moves the rock in the direction they want this means one of their wills is dominant and the other is lacking. Thus, in this scenario, the result is one God with an absolute, dominant will.

In the second scenario, both gods who want to move the rock just cancel each other out. This is not possible since we have creation existing which means something has been willed.

The final scenario is that they both move the rock in the same direction all the time.

They both will everything exactly the same, always. In reality, this is just one will since there is nothing to tell one will apart from the other. Hence, the conclusion is one God.

Now that we have looked at critical thinking vis-à-vis logical fallacies and via the Qur'an, let us proceed with a practical example of how to use critical thinking in dismantling shubuhāt. If you recall, in the section where we discussed sources of doubts, we presented a tripartite categorization of the sources of doubts into 1) philosophical/scientific doubts, 2) moral/social doubts and 3) trauma.

One of the oft repeated, outdated, clichéd philosophical doubts is, 'If the universe needs a creator, then who created God?' While this doubt is presented as a question, the doubt is basically stating that since the universe requires a creator then God also requires a creator. In making use of our critical thinking skills, our first step is to expose the false assumptions behind the stated doubt. There are three false assumptions. The first is that it makes the universe and God the same. The universe began, God did not begin. Things that begin to exist require a cause, a creator or an explanation. God is eternal and He is not finite. Therefore, He was not caused or created. In essence, the claim being made is paradoxical since it is equivalent to asking, "Who created the uncreated Creator?" Such a question lacks meaning and has no logical value. It would be as meaningless as a married bachelor since by definition, a bachelor is unmarried.

In a conversation, your interlocutor might object to this assumption being false. They may state that since everything has a cause, God must have a cause as well. This leads us to exposing the second false assumption. This assumption misapplies the principle of causality. In other words, it is NOT whatever exists has a cause rather it is whatever BEGINS to exist has a cause. God never began to exist and therefore does not require a cause.

Your interlocutor at this point might object to the very notion that God did not begin to exist. They may state that God indeed could have a creator. This assertion is where we uncover the third false assumption, the absurdity of an infinite regress of causes. To understand this fallacy, imagine creator X created the universe, and creator X was created by Y, and Y was created by Z and Z by ZX, and ZX by ZY, and that went on forever. Would this universe ever come into existence? It would not because in order for the universe to exist there would have had to be a completion of an infinite regress of causes. If we assume an infinite regress of causes, it means it is never complete. In other words, it would never end. And if the regress of causes never ends, the universe would never come into existence. However, the universe does exist and therefore, there must be an uncreated creator by logical necessity.

[1] *It seems the physicist who was writing a book about the discovery of the Higgs Boson, Leon Lederman, had titled his book, "The Goddamn Particle" indicating the enormous difficulty in actually finding the particle. His publishers, however, changed the title to "The God Particle" since this was thought to incite more interest in the book and by extension, lead to increased sales. See Dickerson, Kelly. "Here's What Scientists Really Wanted to Call the World's Most Famous Particle." Insider, May 20, 2015. https://www.businessinsider.com/why-the-higgs-is-called-the-god-particle-2015-5.*

[2] *For a detailed explanation of the contingency argument, see Tzortzis, Hamza Andreas. The Divine Reality: God, Islam and The Mirage of Atheism (Newly Revised Edition). London: Sapience Institute, 2019., chap. 6: The Divine Link- The Argument from Dependency.*

[3] *Taşköprüzāde, Aḥmad B. Khalīl. A Treatise on Disputation and Argument: Risālat Al-Ādāb Fī ʿIlm Al-Baḥth Wa'l-Munāẓara. Translated by Safaruk Z. Chowdhury, 2020.*

[4] *Examples taken from Taşköprüzāde, Aḥmad B. Khalīl. A Treatise on Disputation and Argument: Risālat Al-Ādāb Fī ʿIlm Al-Baḥth Wa'l-Munāẓara. Translated by Safaruk Z. Chowdhury, 2020.*

[5] *Taşköprüzāde, Aḥmad B. Khalīl. A Treatise on Disputation and Argument: Risālat Al-Ādāb Fī ʿIlm Al-Baḥth Wa'l-Munāẓara. Translated by Safaruk Z. Chowdhury, 2020.*

[6] *"The Art of Debate and Disputation" https://learn.sapienceinstitute.org/courses/the-art-of-debate-and-disputation/.*

[7] *القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-'Anbya' [21:66-67] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 27, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/21/66-67.*

[8] *القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Mu'minun [23:91] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 27, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/23/91.*

17. Strategy 7: Find a Specialist

The seventh strategy is to find a specialist. Many times we may feel that if we just think hard enough about a matter or perhaps read enough concerning an issue, we will be able to get the answer and if we fail to do so, we consider this a doubt that doesn't have a response. The reality is that we all have epistemic limitations and just because you don't know the answer to a particular question doesn't mean the answer doesn't exist. We understand the concept of epistemic limitations when we consider the fact that we all depend upon the knowledge and expertise of others in many domains that we have not learned or been exposed to. That is the reason a person would go to a doctor or trust the pilot of a plane since, unless someone is an expert in those particular fields, we need their knowledge and expertise when we are sick or when we engage in air travel. Elizabeth Fricker, an Oxford university professor of philosophy who specializes in epistemology, states:

"It should be immediately obvious that in the conditions of modern life we rely hugely on the epistemic and practical skills of others.... For example, I allow my car mechanic to find out what the fault is with my car when it won't start and then to fix it for me and one relies on one's doctor to use information from symptoms and medical tests to diagnose what is wrong with one and then to prescribe an appropriate treatment."[1]

Regarding this idea of epistemic limitations, the Qur'an makes it clear that the only One free of these limitations is Allah:

"Above everyone who has knowledge there is the One who is all knowing."[2]

Hence, it behooves a person to reach out to others, particularly specialists, since no person can claim to encompass the totality of knowledge. The cure to ignorance about a matter is to simply ask,

So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know.[3]

Seeking out specialists in your local community includes reaching out to imam, scholars, counselors and others specialists. However, one is not only limited to their local community. With the rapid proliferation of the internet, there are now many ways to communicate with specialists across the globe when one has questions.[4] *This is in fact the beauty of being a part of the Muslim ummah in that we support each other:*

The believers, both men and women, support each other; they order what is right and forbid what is wrong; they keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; they obey God and His Messenger. God will give His mercy to such people: God is almighty and wise.[5]

[1] RoyIntPhilosophy. "Elizabeth Fricker – Should We Worry About Losing Skills to Robots?" Video. YouTube, November 27, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsZRfT3G7nM.

[2] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Yusuf [12:76] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 28, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/12/76.

[3] القرآن الكريم. "Surat An-Nahl [16:43] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 28, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/16/43.

[4] Sapience Institute has a one to one mentoring service called Lighthouse Mentoring where a person can book a one hour session and speak to a mentor. For information on this please visit: https://www.lighthousementoring.org/

[5] القرآن الكريم. "Surat At-Tawbah [9:71] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 28, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/9/71.

18. Strategy 8: Dealing with Trauma

Trauma is a psychological or an emotional response to a deeply distressing event.[1] Most people experience some form of trauma in their lives. From an Islamic worldview, no one is exempt from exposure to distressing events in their lives:

Do the people think that they will be left to say: We believe, and they will not be tried? But we have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.[2]

It is noteworthy that trauma is based on the response to the distressing event and not necessarily the event itself. It may be the case that one event is causing distress for a person and the same event is not for another person. It may even be the case that a distressing event at one time in a person's life causes trauma but in another phase in a person's life there is no response to the very same event.

Trauma can lead to destructive doubts due to cognitive distortions. A cognitive distortion is a thought pattern that is irrational or exaggerated which is linked to the onset or perpetuation of psychopathological states, such as depression and anxiety.[3] *To put it simply, cognitive distortions are thoughts that cause someone to perceive reality inaccurately. Thus a mapping of how trauma is linked to destructive doubts is:*

Trauma → Cognitive Distortions → Destructive Doubts

An example of how this is manifest would be a person who grew up in a conservative Muslim household and witnessed constant spousal physical abuse by one of their parents on the other. Such a person may causally link the practice of Islam to the physical abuse they witnessed and as a result preceive Islam to be false.

Since trauma can cause cognitive distortions, this will impact a person's worldview. For example, a woman who has been subject to sexual abuse by a man may develop a cognitive distortion that all men are evil and as a result adopt extreme feminism as the lens by which she views reality (i.e. her worldview). When she thus looks at some of the rules in Islamic Law, she views them from the paradigm of the 'injustice of the oppressive patriarchy' and deems them unfair. If you recall from the section on the components of a worldview, this person has certain, perhaps subconscious, ontological, epistemological, anthropological and teleological commitments that impact her judgment about Islamic law and can be traced back to cognitive distortions that emerged from her underlying trauma.

So, how do we deal with trauma? First, we should refer to strategy #7, finding a specialist. In this regard, the specialist would be a therapist that could help uncover and deal with trauma by the various means that they have been trained in.

Second, we should consider standing in the possibility that the meaning we have given our trauma is misplaced. In highlighting the value of the meaning we give our trauma, David Kessler, speaking about the trauma of losing a loved one, says,

"meaning comes through finding a way to sustain your love for the person after their death while you're moving forward with your life. Loss is simply what happens to you in life. Meaning is what **you** *make happen."*[4]

Based upon the meaning you attach to trauma, there can be post-traumatic healing and even post-traumatic growth. Najwa Awad and Sarah Sultan outline the following five areas where this could be possible:

A greater appreciation of life – After being buried in grief and overwhelming trauma, emergence from the rubble can lead to a changed perspective and much gratefulness, making the mundane details of life seem like extraordinary blessings.
Increased closeness in relationships – Experiencing the severance of a relationship or living through trauma can increase the appreciation we feel for significant people in our lives and allow us to be more empathetic toward them.
Identification of new possibilities – Life-changing events shift our priorities. Suddenly things can seem clearer and opportunities that may have been there all along are suddenly discernible.
Increased personal strength – Before enduring particularly difficult circumstances, you may have thought that everything you are currently handling would have been impossible for you. Once you've been through tremendous hardships, future challenges do not seem as daunting.
Greater spiritual development – Going through suffering can result in a sense of spiritual and religious renewal and a greater sense of closeness to Allah ﷻ. When our priorities change, God becomes a more integral part of our daily lives, which adds to a sense of stability and growth.[5]

When we stand in possibility of an alternative meaning to our suffering, it would allow us to identify a negative meaning we may have given it and replace that with the meaning that Allah gives to the suffering. Of course, the meaning that Allah gives to suffering must be rooted in the Islamic worldview and its answers to fundamental existential questions i.e. questions about our existence: How did I get here? What is my purpose? What happens when I die? According to the Islamic worldview, Allah has created us so that we may worship and draw near to Him. It is from this vantage point that we can appropriately apply meaning to our trauma that is sound.[6]

Let us conclude by juxtaposing two different conceptualizations of 'meaning' to pain, suffering and trauma. The first comes from the worldview of an atheist, Richard Dawkins:

"On the contrary, if the universe were just electrons and selfish genes, meaningless tragedies like the crashing of this bus are exactly what we should expect, along with equally meaningless good fortune. Such a universe would be neither evil nor good in intention. It would manifest no intentions of any kind. In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice.The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."[7]

The second comes from the worldview of a Muslim:

"Your pain and suffering will be rewarded with eternal bliss in paradise. If you suffered for a whole lifetime and you were dipped in paradise for a moment you would feel that you have never suffered. Evil and suffering exists to test you, elevate you and facilitate a higher spiritual state. It is meant to bring you closer to the Divine, therefore closer to paradise. As a believer, any pain or suffering is a means to absolve you from your shortcomings and sins. When you are tested with evil and suffering it is a sign of Divine love, for He knows you have the ability to overcome the trials in your life. He knows you better than you know yourself."

[1] *See Today, Psychology. "Trauma." Psychology Today, March 17, 2009. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/trauma.*

[2] *القرآن الكريم, "Surat Al-'Ankabut [29:2-3] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 28, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/29/2-3.*

[3] *See Helmond, Petra, Geertjan Overbeek, Daniel Brugman, and John C. Gibbs. "A Meta-Analysis on Cognitive Distortions and Externalizing Problem Behavior." Criminal Justice and Behavior 42, no. 3 (October 17, 2014): 245–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854814552842.*

[4] *Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth, and David Kessler. On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss. Simon and Schuster, 2014.*

[5] *See Awad, Najwa, and Sarah Sultan. "Your Lord Has Not Forsaken You: Addressing the Impact of Trauma on Faith." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. Accessed March 28, 2022. https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/your-lord-has-not-forsaken-you-addressing-the-impact-of-trauma-on-faith.*

[6] *For a comprehensive analysis on the meanings and wisdoms behind trauma under the Islamic paradigm, see Sulami, 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Salām, and Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah. Trials & Tribulations: Wisdom & Benefits, 2004.*

[7] *Dawkins, Richard. River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life. Basic Books, 2008.*

19. Strategy 9: Focus on Your Heart

Under strategy 5, Study Islam, we highlighted how studying Islam is different than studying any other subject because it involved a dynamic interplay between knowledge and spirituality. We also spoke about the fact that shubuhāt only resemble the truth and are not the truth and as such, they don't have any intellectual weight. Remember, shubuhāt are not strong, but it is our hearts that are weak.

The 12th century polymath, Ibn Taymiyyah beautifully expresses the centrality of the heart and its role in the constitution of the human being under the Islamic worldview:

"The master of knowledge, in reality, is the heart. The remainder of the organs and limbs are gatemen to whom information reaches, which they are unable to acquire themselves. [It is the master] to the degree that whoever loses any of the other organs, loses only the knowledge that was conveyed through them. Thus, the deaf person is unable to gain knowledge from speech, and the blind person is unaware of what vast knowledge objects contain. Likewise, whoever looks at things or listens to the words of scholars, without the participation of the heart, does not understand anything. Thus, the pivot of the affairs is the heart. Here the wisdom of the Almighty's statement becomes clear:

'So have they not traveled through the earth and (don't they) have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.'[1]

Sight is not mentioned here as in the previous verses because the context of the statement here is regarding unseen things, and the lessons to be understood from the final end of things, in which sight has no role."[2]

Considering the indispensable need to have a strong heart when confronted with destructive doubts, it behooves us to focus on our hearts and take all measures necessary to strengthen our hearts. Hence, our ninth strategy is to Focus on Your Heart and Strengthen it.

Strengthening your heart such that it moves from being a sponge to becoming an unbreakable glass as was an analogy that was quoted earlier from Ibn Taymiyyah's advice to Ibn Qayyim:

"*Do not allow your heart to be a sponge for every doubt and allegation so that it drinks them up and is moistened with nothing else. Instead, make your heart like solid glass; doubts pass over its surface but do not settle on the inside. Thus, the doubts are seen through the clearness of the glass, but are repelled by its firmness. Otherwise, if you allow your heart to drink every doubt you encounter, it will end up affirming them...*"[3]

How does one strengthen their heart? The topic of strengthening the heart subsumes many subtopics that a person would need to study, internalize and consistently put into practice. Some of these subtopics are:

- – Diseases of the Heart such as kibr (arrogance), 'ujub (self aggrandizement) , riya' (ostentation), ḥasad (blameworth jealousy).
- – Actions of the Heart such as raja' (hope in Allah's mercy), khawf (fear of Allah's wrath), ḥub (love of Allah).
- – Spiritual practices such as qiyām al-layl (the night prayer), ṣawm (fasting), ṣadaqh (charity).

It is outside the scope of this section of the book to cover the entire gamut of subtopics that fall under the umbrella of strengthening the heart. However, we will suffice in offering some key ways in which a person can start on the journey of making their heart sound.

1. Tawbah – Repentance

Turning to Allah and seeking His forgiveness i.e. 'tawbah', is an essential tool in a person's spiritual toolbox. The reason is because we as human beings all sin and when we do, an impediment is placed upon the heart such that truth may not be recognized by the heart. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said,

"Verily, when the servant commits a sin, a black mark appears upon his heart. If he abandons the sin, seeks forgiveness, and repents, then his heart will be polished. If he returns to the sin, the blackness will be increased until it overcomes his heart. It is the covering that Allah has mentioned:

No, *rather a covering is over their hearts from what they have earned.*[4"5]

1. Kibr – Arrogance

Every human being has an ego. It is by this ego that we are able to have a healthy sense of self and thus, have the confidence we need to do a number of beneficial tasks. However, a person can go beyond acceptable confidence and become arrogant. Arrogance is one of the greatest spiritual diseases one can be afflicted with and one must be vigilant in guarding his heart from such a dangerous malady.

It was narrated from 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood that the Prophet ﷺ said: "No one who has an atom's-weight of arrogance in his heart will enter Paradise." A man said, "O Messenger of Allah, what if a man likes his clothes and his shoes to look good?" He said, "Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty. Arrogance means rejecting the truth and looking down on people."[6]

The word for arrogance in Arabic is 'kibr' and comes from the triliteral root k-b-r which means 'to become great, big, large'.[7] When a person sees themself as being great and above others, in a sense they consider themselves 'big' and others 'small'. Since this false sense of 'bigness' is how arrogant people conducted themselves while they were alive, when these people come on the day of judgment, their physical manifestation will be that will be the smallest of all people, so much so that they will be trampled upon by everyone else:

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The arrogant and the tyrants will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection as tiny particles. The people will trample upon them due to their disgrace before Allah Almighty."[8]

Since kibr has to do with a false sense of thinking of oneself as 'big' or 'great', the cure to this disease would be to practice those spiritual exercises that cause a person to realize their 'smallness'. One way to do this is to ponder upon death:

Anas reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, passed by a group who were laughing and playing. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Remember often the destroyer of pleasures: death."[9]

Death is a gate that every human has to pass through. We may have spent our life building our wealth, our reputation, our fame but all of that will come to an end with death and we will come to Allah with the absolute clear truth about how 'great' we really were.

Another means to remind us of our 'smallness' is to reflect upon the majesty and greatness of Allah and understand our total and utter dependency upon Allah. As Allah says,

O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.[10]

In this verse, 'those in need' is the word fuqarā' which gives the sense of being a beggar with no money or resources at all. This term is juxtaposed against 'Allah is the Free of need' or 'Allah is Al-Ghani' and this term, 'Al-Ghani' gives the sense of richness or wealth that signifies that Allah owns everything. When a person reflects upon their own limitations and compares that to the nature of Allah, they realize their insignificance or 'smallness'.

1. Dhikr – Remembrance of Allah

The remembrance of Allah, dhikr, is one of the best ways to cleanse and strengthen the heart. The Prophet ﷺ said,

"*For everything there is a polish, and the polish for the hearts is the dhikr (remembrance) of Allah. There is nothing more potent in saving a person from the punishment of Allah than the dhikr of Allah.*" *It was said: Not even Jihād in the path of Allah? So he replied: "Not even if you were to continue striking with your sword until it breaks."*[11]

The motif of the heart becoming blackened or stained or rusted is employed often in Islamic literature (see hadīth in the section on Tawbah above). Ibn Qayyim makes use of the same motif when speaking about dhikr,

"*Whoever neglects [remembering Allah] most of the time, then his heart will become rusty in accordance with how neglectful the person is. And when this [filthy] rust accumulates on the heart, then it no longer recognises things as they really are. Thus, it views falsehood as if it is the truth, and truth as if it is falsehood. This is because this rust darkens and confuses the heart's perception, and so it is unable to truly recognise things for what they really are. So as the rust accumulates, the heart gets blackened, and as this happens the heart becomes stained with this filthy rust, and when this occurs it corrupts the heart's perception and recognition of things. The heart [then] does not accept the truth nor does it reject falsehood, and this is the greatest calamity that can strike the heart. Being neglectful [of dhikr] and following of whims and desires is a direct consequence of such a heart, which [further] extinguish the heart's light and blinds its vision. Allah – the Most High – said:*

"*And do not obey him whose heart We have made to be neglectful of Our remembrance, one who follows his own whims and desires and whose affairs are furat [have gone beyond bounds and whose deeds have been lost].*"[12][13]

1. Tahajjud – The Night Prayer

While the obligatory five prayers themselves are essential in strengthening the heart, tahajjud or the night prayer has a special significance:

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of prayers, after those prescribed, is that which is offered in the depth of the night."[14]

The effect upon the heart of the night prayers is especially significant since it is a time when Allah comes closer to His servant (i.e. the one standing in prayer):

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger ﷺ as saying:

"Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven in the last third of every night, and he says: Who is calling upon me that I may answer him? Who is asking from me that I may give him? Who is seeking my forgiveness so that I may forgive him?"[15]

The last third of the night[16] is a time when most people are asleep and it is truly someone who loves Allah that would wake up at that time and pray to Allah.

[1] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Haj [22:46] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 28, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/22/46.

[12] Taymīyah, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn. A *Commentary on Ibn Taymiyyah's: Essay on the Heart*. Translated by Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips. Selangor: Dakwah Corner Bookstore , 2008.

[3] Jawziyya, Ibn Qayyim al-. مفتاح دار السعادة و منشور ولاية العلم و الارادة. Vol. 1. Mecca: Dar Alam al-Fawa'id, 2010. , Pg. 395

[4] القرآن الكريم. “Surat Al-Mutaffifin [83:14] – The Noble Qur’an.” Accessed March 28, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/83/14.

[5] Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn ʻĪsá. *Sunan Al-Tirmidhi*, 1965., No. 3334

[6] Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
[7] Wehr, Hans, and J. Milton Cowan. *Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (English and Arabic Edition)*. Snowballpublishing.com, 2020. Pg. 947-948

[8] al-Tawāḍu’ wal-Khumūl 224. Grade: *Hasan* (fair) according to Al-‘Iraqi

[9] Shu’ab al-Imān 4493. Grade: *Hasan* (fair) according to Al-Albani

[10] القرآن الكريم. “Surat Fatir [35:15] – The Noble Qur’an.” Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/35/15.

[11] Related by Ahmad (4/352), from Mu’adh ibn Jabal. It was authenticated by al-Albaanee in Saheehul-Jaami’ (no.5644)

[12] القرآن الكريم. “Surat Al-Kahf [18:28] – The Noble Qur’an.” Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/18/28.

[13] Ibn al-Qayyim, AI-Waabilus-Sayyib min Kalimit-Tayyib (pp.78-82)
[14] Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
[15] Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*
[16] The last third of the night is calculated by taking the time between the maghrib prayer and the fajr prayer and dividing it into three.

20. Strategy 10: Make Du'ā

All of the strategies presented thus far would be completely ineffective if not for the will and help of Allah. As such, the most important strategy is to seek the help of Allah in strengthening your heart and dealing with shubuhāt and we do this by supplicating to and imploring Allah i.e. du'ā. Du'ā is at the center of our being as Al-Khattabi states,

"The meaning of du'ā is the servant's asking his Lord for His Help, and asking His continued support. Its essence is that a person shows his neediness to Allah, and frees himself from any power or ability to change (any matter by himself). This characteristic is the mark of servitude, and in it is the feeling of human submissiveness. Du'ā also carries the meaning of praising Allah, and attributing to Him Generosity and Bounteousness."[1]

There are many du'ā that are mentioned in the Qur'an, the corpus of hadīth literature and narrations from the companions of the Prophet ﷺ related to strengthening the heart and dealing with shubuhāt. Below are mentioned some of the most powerful and heart warming ones for one to memorize and use.

Du'ā to separate between truth and that which resembles it (i.e. shubuhāt):

Al-Buhuti reported: Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "O Allah, show me the truth as truth and guide me to follow it. Show me the falsehood as falsehood and guide me to avoid it."[2]
Prophetic Du'ā to make firm one's heart:

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Oh turner of the hearts (Allah, the Most High), keep my heart firm on Your Dīn ."[3]

Prophetic Du'ā for a sound heart and general steadfastness:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to say in his prayer: "O Allah, I ask You for steadfastness in all my affairs and determination in following the right path, I ask You to make me thankful for Your blessings and to make me worship You properly. I ask You for a sound heart and a truthful tongue. I ask You for the best of what You know and I seek refuge in You from the worst of what You know and I seek Your forgiveness for what You know."[4]
Qur'anic Du'ā for a strengthening the heart:

"Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower."[5]

Other Relevant Qur'anic Du'ā:

"Guide us to the straight path. The path that You have bestowed Your favor upon, not (the path) of those who have earned anger, nor those who have gone astray."[6]

"Our Lord! We have heard the caller to ˊtrueˋ belief, ˊproclaiming,ˋ ˊBelieve in your Lord ˊaloneˋ,ˋ so we believed. Our Lord! Forgive our sins, absolve us of our misdeeds, and allow us ˊeachˋ to die as one of the virtuous."[7]

"Our Lord! Shower us with perseverance, and let us die while submitting ˊtoˋ You ."[8]

"Our Lord! Grant us mercy from Yourself and guide us rightly through our ordeal."[9]

"Our Lord! We believe in Your revelations and follow the messenger, so count us among those who bear witness."[10]

"My Lord! Make me and those ˊbelieversˋ of my descendants keep up prayer. Our Lord! Accept my prayers."[11]

Other Relevant Prophetic Du'ā:

The Prophet ﷺ said: "There is no Muslim – or no person, or slave (of Allah) – who says, in the morning and evening: 'I am content with Allah as my Lord, Islam as my religion and Muhammad as my Prophet', but he will have a promise from Allah to make him pleased on the Day of Resurrection."[12]

"O Allah, I ask You for Your love and the love of those who love You and love of the action which will make me reach Your love."[13]

Zaid bin Arqam narrated that the Prophet ﷺ used to supplicate: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from knowledge which does not benefit, from a heart that does not entertain the fear (of Allah), from a soul that is not satisfied and the supplication that is not answered."[14]

[1] Quoted in Qadhi, Abu Ammaar Yasir, and Al Hidaayah Publishing & Distribution. Du'A: The Weapon of the Believer, 2001., pg. 22

[2] Sharḥ al-Muntahá al-Irādāt 3/497

[3]> Authenticated by al-Albanee in al-Jaam'i as-Sagheer 1323/7988

[4] Sunan an-Nasa'i 1304 (Hasan)

[5] القرآن الكريم. "Surat 'Ali 'Imran [3:8] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/3/8.

[6] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Fatihah [1:6-7] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/1/6-7.

[7] القرآن الكريم. "Surat 'Ali 'Imran [3:193] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/3/193.

[8] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-'A'raf [7:126] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/7/126.

[9] القرآن الكريم. "Surat Al-Kahf [18:10] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/18/10.

[10] القرآن الكريم. "Surat 'Ali 'Imran [3:53] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/3/53.

[11] القرآن الكريم. "Surat 'Ibrahim [14:40] – The Noble Qur'an." Accessed March 29, 2022. https://legacy.quran.com/14/40.

[12] Sunan Ibn Majah 3870 (Hasan)

[13] Tirmidhi #3490 (Hasan Ghareeb)

[14] Qushayrī, Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim